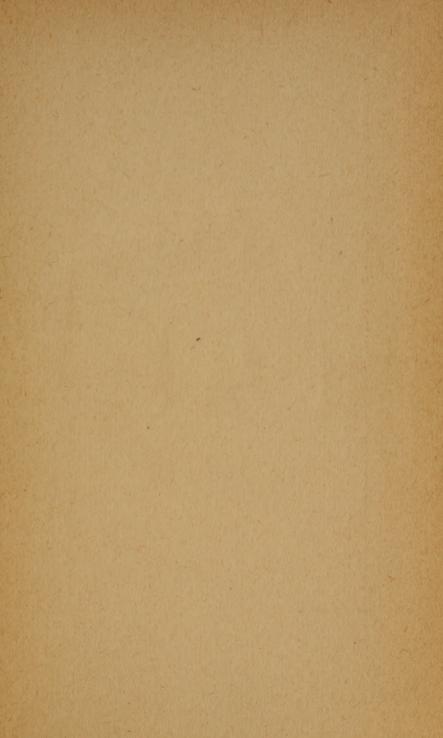
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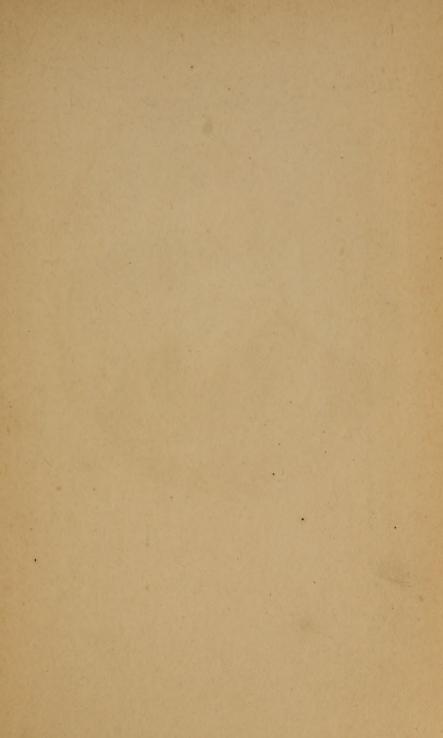






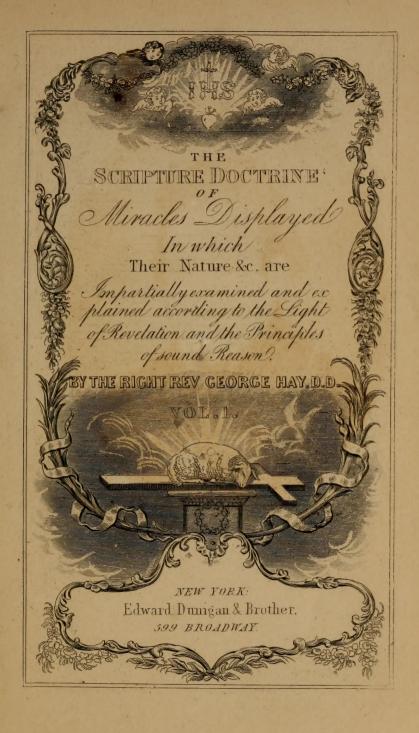








RIGHT REV. GEORGE HAY, D.D.









SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES

DISPLAYED:

IN WHICH

THEIR NATURE, ETC., ARE IMPARTIALLY EXAMINED AND EXPLAINED,

ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT OF REVELATION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF SOUND REASON.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. GEORGE HAY, D. D.

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PREFACE.

THE celebrated Mr. Hume and his free-thinking brethren have not been wanting to attack the existence of miracles in the most daring manner. Their audacity has served to excite the zeal of several learned friends of Christianity, who have drawn their pens in its defence, and vindicated this grand argument of revelation from the sophistry and ridicule employed by those writers to undermine it. After the many excellent treatises which these gentlemen have written in defence of this cause, it will, perhaps, be thought that the subject is now exhausted, and that nothing more remains to be said concerning it. A little attention, however, will show that there is still a great deal to be done. Notwithstanding all that has been published concerning miracles, the learned writers themselves -do not seem to have formed a settled conclusive judgment on all points regarding them :- And as for others who read, even attentively, those learned works, I doubt much if they find their minds greatly improved by such reading, or feel an interior conviction of truth from their reasonings on the several points relating to miracles, of which they treat.

This seems to arise chiefly from three causes: First, the several writers on miracles have formed to them-

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serves very different ideas of the word miracle; and given us very different definitions and explanations of it. Hence they set out on opposite principles, and treat of very different subjects, though under the same name; which of necessity renders their reasonings and conclusions different and opposite to one another, and sadly confuses the minds and ideas of their readers.

Secondly, There are several points to be examined concerning miracles, in order to have a complete knowledge of that subject. Some of these are more intricate and abstruse, others more plain and simple, which serve as a guide and introduction to the former: But none of the writers on miracles, as far as I have had occasion to see, has considered all these several heads in a full, natural and methodical manner. They generally write upon some one or other of them by itself, detached from the rest; and too often suppose their readers to be perfectly well acquainted with the ideas they themselves have of all other particulars, and upon which ideas their reasonings are grounded; but as this is very seldom the case, their arguments are thereby rendered more obscure and less conclusive, even where they have truth upon their side.

THIRDLY, Those who have treated this subject as Christians, and in defence of religion, have paid by far too little regard to what the sacred scriptures teach concerning it. Mr. Hume and his party not only discard all connection with the scripture from their side of the question, but would laugh at their adversaries, should they pretend to confute them by the authority of these sacred records. Hence the word of God has

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been in a manner entirely laid aside in these disputes about miracles:—Whereas, miracles being properly the works of the Omnipotent, it is chiefly (if not only) from His sacred word that we can be thoroughly instructed concerning them. And, indeed, it is amazing to consider what ample information is contained in the word of God on every point relating to these matters; and how unaccountably this has been neglected and overlooked, even by those Christian authors who have undertaken to write in their vindication.

An attempt to supply these defects, and to elucidate the Scripture Doctrine of Miracles in all its parts, in a plain, orderly and methodical manner, may be of no small benefit to the cause of religion, and it is hoped, on that account, will not be unacceptable to all those who wish well to Christianity. This is what the author of the following work has endeavoured to do: How far he has succeeded in his endeavours, he leaves to the judgment of his candid readers. sensible of his own great deficiency in point of language and style; a pleasing kind of argument which the writers against Christian miracles have known how to use with so much success. His chief dependence is upon the goodness of the cause he defends, and the strength of those reasons which support it; and if, even in this, he has not carried his plan to that perfection of which it is capable, he hopes that his attempt may prove the means of inciting some abler hand to prosecute the work, and fully supply all his deficiencies



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SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES

DISPLAYED.

CHAPTER I.

On the nature of Miracles, according to the Christian idea of them, and their different kinds.

I. We find a very great variety among the learned in the definitions given by them of a Miracle: some consider only the effect produced, and define the word accordingly, telling us, that as "effects produced by the regular operation of the laws of nature, are called natural; so effects contrary to this settled constitution and course of things, are miraculous." Others in defining a Miracle include the producing cause, without which, they imagine, we cannot have a proper idea of what a Miracle is.* Some confine their notion of the producing cause to God only, as in Le Moine's definition; others admit for true Miracles what may be performed by created beings of a superior nature to man. †

*" A true Miracle," says Le Moine, "is a sensible, unusual operation or effect above the natural ability or inherent power of natural agents; that is, of all created beings; and therefore performable by God alone."

[†] Thus Mr. Chub, defining a Miracle, observes, "This term, I think, is used to express a sensible effect, which is above the natural ability or inherent power of a man to cause or produce; which is likewise above, or besides, the ordinary course of nature, and which also is produced by the agency or co-operation of an invisible being." Dr. Chandler, in his discourse on the nature and use of Miracles, gives a very singular definition of them, and says that only is a Miracle. "where the action exceeds the utmost capacity of the agent."

Another source of this difference among these writers about the nature of a Miracle, arises from the different ideas they form of what is natural, and what is supernatural. According to Le Moine, the word nature and natural is the same as creation and created, and consequently nothing is supernatural, in his opinion, but what immediately belongs to, or is done by God alone: others confine the words nature and natural to the material creation only, and consequently give the term supernatural to the operations of spiritual created beings, as well as to those of the Creator, as we have seen in the definition of a Miracle given by Mr. Chub: others again use these terms in their definition, without explaining at all whether they take them in the one sense or the other.*

II. Whoever considers attentively these several definitions, will easily perceive the very different ideas they convey to the mind. It is not my intention to examine their respective merit or demerit. Some of these gentlemen have endeavoured to expose the defects of those given by others, while the definitions laid down by themselves have not escaped the censure of their opponents. This great difference, however, in their notions and ideas of Miracles, is one plain cause of the many different systems that have been formed on this subject, and of the amazing disagreement between them. In order that I may

^{*}Thus the Bishop of St. David's, in his Vindication of the Miracles of our Saviour, says: "A true Miracle is properly a supernatural operation, disagreeing with, and repugnant to the usual course of things, and the known laws of nature, either as to the subject-matter, or the manner of its performance." Many of our latest writers on this subject give a more vague and undeterminate definition of Miracles, calling them "effects unusual above human power, and manifesting the interposition of superior power." According to Mr. Locke, no more seems requisite to the being of a Miracle, than that it should appear so to the spectator; for he calls it "a sensible operation, which exceeds the capacity of the spectator, and which he believes to be contrary to the course of nature, and judges to be divine." Mr. Hume, with his vaunted precision, says: A Miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volitition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent. Ess. on Mir. p. 182. And in another place, he calls it violation of the usual course of nature. Finally, (to cite no more) "Every sensible deviation from, or contradiction to the known laws of nature must be an evident and incontestable Miracle," says Mr. Farmer, p 21

avoid as much as possible these defects, I propose to take a view of the subject-matter of *Miracles*, and of the agents by whom *Miracles* are performed; and, in doing this, I will endeavour to give a precise explanation of the terms that properly belong to this subject; from all which the definition of a *Miracle*, according to the Christian

sense of the word will naturally flow.

III. 1. The works of God, which more or less fall under our observation and experience, are all comprehended in this visible and material creation: Of this some parts are more immediately subjected to the examination of our senses, as the earth on which we dwell and all things upon it; others, being a distance, as the heavenly bodies, we know only by observation; and argue about them chiefly by calculation and analogy. To this whole complex of the material visible creation, we give the name of nature.

2. To all those parts of nature which fall under our immediate inspection, we find from experience that the Creator has given certain powers or forces, which when applied to action in their proper circumstances, produce certain determinate effects. Thus the power of gravity makes bodies near the earth tend towards its center; the rays of the sun falling upon the earth produce heat and light; the seeds of vegetables sown in a proper soil, after a certain time, produce plants and trees; food taken into animal bodies nourishes and strengthens them; the annual motion of the earth round the sun makes the different seasons of the year; its diurnal motion round its own axis causes day and night; and so on of others. Now, as all these powers of created nature are found by observation to act in a constant uniform manner, and, when placed in exactly the same circumstances, produce always the same determinate effects; if we inquire whence this uniform connection between natural created causes and their effects can arise, we must at last resolve it into the will of the Creator. It is true, in many particular cases we may observe a mechanical fitness between the cause and its effects, as in the mechanism of a watch or of a clock;

yet, if we push our inquiry farther, and ask whence these mechanical powers come to act in such and such a manner, we must at last refer them to the will of the Supreme Author of nature, for no other reason can be assigned.— Thus, in examining the powers of gravity and attraction; or the sensations excited in our mind by the action of external bodies on the organs of our senses; or why the rays of the sun occasion light and heat, and in numberless other cases, we can discover no mechanical connection between the cause and its effects, and therefore must. attribute this constant uniformity between them to the will of the Creator who impressed it upon them at the creation by way of a law. Hence, the general term of The Laws of Nature is justly given to those constant uniform rules, by which natural causes never fail to produce certain determinate effects in certain circumstances.

3. When any being in this visible creation exerts its natural powers, and produces the effects proper to them, it is called a natural agent. If it be necessarily applied to action, without any free-will, of its own to suspend its operations at pleasure, it is called a necessary agent. If it is endowed with free-will, of and can act or not act, by its own choice, it is called a free agent. Fire, for exam ple, is a necessary agent, because it has no free-will nor choice in its operations, but of necessity burns and consumes the fuel laid upon it. Man, on the contrary, is a free agent, because he is not under the necessity of performing these operations that are proper to him, but may or may not perform them as he pleases.

4. We learn from experience, that among the several powers or forces observed in different creatures, some are stronger than others; and that when two unequal powers meet in opposition to one another, the weaker is overcome, and that law of nature, by which it would otherwise have produced its proper effect is suspended by the superior power acting against it. Thus, though by the laws of gravity a stone is always drawn towards the centre of the earth, and, if left to itself at a certain distance from the earth, would immediately fall down towards it;

yet, if a superior force to that of gravity in the stone be applied to it, from the strength of a man's hand, for example, or of gun-powder, it may be made to fly upwards from the earth by a motion diametrically opposite in its direction to that which the laws of gravity produce; which laws of gravity are in this case said to be suspended, as to the external effect visibly produced in the motion ofthe stone, by laws of a superior force applied in opposition to them. Numberless other examples might bebrought of the same thing, by which it appears that the powers or forces given by the Almighty to different creatures have in each a certain degree of strength only, and that they may be hindered from producing their proper effects, or even quite opposite effects be produced in them by stronger and opposite powers acting against them; or which comes to the same thing, that the laws of nature, by which these powers produce their effects, may be suspended for a time by contrary and stronger laws acting in opposition to them.

5. A suspension of the laws of nature, or to suspend the laws of nature, are expressions very commonly made use of by writers on Miracles; but perhaps it would convey a clearer and more precise idea to the mind, were we to call it a suspension of the usual effects of these laws. These expressions may be understood of two things; for they may either imply a temporary annihilation or destruction of the very power itself in the agent, or they may only mean the preventing of the sensible effect of that power, while the power itself remains entire. It is in this last sense only in which it seems necessary to use these expressions for he purpose of Miracles; the former signification is not t n fact, always true, nor is it at all requisite to suppose it for understanding this matter: when, therefore, I say that the laws of gravity are suspended when the stone is made to fly upwards, I do not mean that the power of gravity is annihilated in the stone; I know it still continues to exert its usual force in opposition to the power acting against it, but only that its sensible effect of making the stone move towards the centre of the earth is superseded or suspended

for the time, and a contrary effect produced in it, by means of the superior power which opposes and over comes it.

- 6. The above observations on the laws of nature, and on the different degrees of strength bestowed on different creatures by Almighty God, and subservient to these laws, holds universally true in all those parts of nature which fall immediately under our examination, and in those also which are at a distance from us, as far as our observations can discover concerning their action and motions. If, therefore, from this we argue by analogy, it is most reasonable to conclude, that all the other parts of nature without exception, however remote from our eye, are governed in the same manner; that is, by certain fixed and constant laws, by which their powers, operations, and effects, are all regulated and determined, according to the views and ends which their sovereign Author had in creating them: and that the forces and powers impressed by him on all the different parts of the material creation, differing from one another in degree of strength, the natural effects of the weaker forces must be superseded and suspended when a greater power acts in opposition to them. If, therefore, we gradually ascend from the weaker to the stronger powers, or from the weaker to the stronger laws, by which the operations of these powers are settled and regulated, we must at last arrive at such powers and laws as are superior to the strength of all corporal or natural agents whatever, and whose effects can be suspended only by beings of a superior nature to this material creation.
- 7. That there are, amongst the works of God, spiritual beings of a nature superior to man, is by no means contrary to reason; nay, it is most reasonable to suppose that such beings exist; and revelation not only assures us of their existence, but also discovers to us several particulars concerning them, to the knowledge of which unassisted reason could never have attained; namely, that these spirits, at their first creation, were placed for a time in a state of trial; that part of them, preserving their fidelity, were confirmed in happiness, and are now in full enjoyment of the

presence of God, and employed by him in executing his sacred commands throughout the rest of the creation: that others revolting against their Creator, their crime was immediately followed by its punishment; they were instantly degraded from their high station, banished from the face of God, and condemned to eternal torments; that both the one and the other possess many qualities and powers of a very superior kind to man, or to anything to be met with in the material creation, both as to knowledge, strength, and agility; and that they can produce effects in the inferior creation contrary to all the stated laws of nature, and superior to the force of any natural agent whatsoever; that they have a nature peculiar to themselves, and that they are governed by laws adapted to their spiritual nature, and very different from those by which matter and motion are regulated in this material creation, with which we are acquainted. It would, therefore, occasion a great confusion of ideas to include both the spiritual and material creation under the general name of *nature*, as their respective natures, and the laws by which they are governed, are, without any doubt, extremely different. Wherefore, to distinguish them properly, we have confined the word nature to the whole complex of this material creation, of which we are a part, and with which we are acquainted; and as spiritual beings are much superior to man in their qualities and powers, we give them the name of supernatural beings; when we consider them as acting in our lower world we call them supernatural agents; and the effects produced by them in nature we call supernatural effects. But as these spiritual beings have a nature peculiar to themselves, and qualities and powers proper to their spiritual natures, when speaking of their several qualities and powers, we are obliged, from the scantiness of lan guage, to apply the word natural to them also, meaning those particular properties which are essential to them, or necessarily belonging to their spiritual natures.

8. The effects produced by supernatural agents, in this material creation, may be conceived to be of two kinds, for they may be supernatural either as to the manner only

of doing them, which must be always the case; or, both as to the matter itself, or the thing performed, as well as to the manner of performing it. If the effect produced be such as exceeds the abilities of all natural agents, then it must be supernatural, both as to the matter and manner: for example, if a man should walk upon the water without any visible cause supporting him, but invisibly supported by an angel, here the effect produced by the angel is supernatural being contrary to all the laws of gravity, which require that the heavy body of a man should sink in water; and the manner of doing it is supernatural also, as being done by the ministry of a supernatural agent. But if the effect produced be such as may be procured by natural means, but as in the present case, is done in a manner superior to the abilities of any natural agent, then it will be supernatural in the manner only. A man may naturally acquire the knowledge of what is done in the most distant parts of the world, but it requires time, and proper information to be brought him by other men from these parts, in order to acquire it; so that this acquisition of knowledge is a natural effect, which may be procured by natural means; but it an angel, from his great agility, should come, almost instantaneously, from some distant parts, and inform any man of what was doing there, almost at the very instant in which it was done, this acquisition of knowledge would be supernatural, not in the thing done, but in the manner only of doing it.

9. It is not necessary that every supernatural operation or effect should always consist in, or imply a suspension of some of the laws of nature. A suspension of any of these laws necessarily supposes the existence of some positive law, and of some real force or power, whose effects are superseded by such suspension. Now, number less effects may be produced in nature by supernatural agents, which do not suspend the effects of any positive law, but only require a power to perform them superior to the abilities of any natural agent. Even man, by his natural abilities, can perform many operations in the crea-

tures about him, and produce many effects in them, without contradicting or suspending any positive law of nature; much more may we suppose supernatural beings capable of doing so also. In the case above-mentioned of an angel communicating to any man, almost instantaneously, the knowledge of what is doing in the most distant parts of the world, there is no positive law of natu. suspended, no effects of any real force of natural agent. superseded, but an affect produced by the angel, which, as to its manner, there is no natural agent capable of performing. In like manner, should Almighty God, in a moment, infuse into any man the knowledge of all sciences, or the power of speaking all languages, these effects would not be contrary to any positive law of nature, nor would they imply a suspension of the effects of any power in nature; but it is plain, they would be the effects of a power superior to that of any natural agent, as it is certain there is no power in nature capable of communicating the instantaneous knowledge of these things to man, without his taking time, and using the ordinary means of study to acquire it. Of the same nature, also, is the raising a person from the dead, in which there is no positive law of nature contradicted, no effects of any natural power suspended; but, as in the former cases, a new effect is produced out of the ordinary course of nature, and above the power of all natural agents to per-Numbers of other cases of the like kind will occur to every intelligent reader; all which we shall call effects produced out of, or beside the usual course of nature, to distinguish them from those which consist in a suspension of any of its laws.

10. However great the strength of created supernatural agents may be, it has its limits, beyond which it can not go. How far it can reach in operating on the material creation, it is impossible for us to determine: it would seem more probable that no created agent could suspend those greater laws of nature, by which the general frame of this universe is sustained; for to what purpose give them a power which they will never have an occasion of

exercising as long as the world shall endure? And when the final dissolution comes, it seems altogether more becoming that the same Almighty Word, which at first enacted these laws, should by himself annul them. Perhaps there may even be many other laws of nature besides those more universal ones, to suspend which exceeds the strength of any created agent; and as for those effects which are out of the usual course of nature, certain it is that there must be numberless such producible in the material creation, which can only be performed by the Almighty hand of the Creator, who, as he made all creatures at the beginning, and gave them each their respective natures, qualities, and powers, so he alone can dispose of them as he pleases, alter their natures, deprive them of their powers, change them one into another, or annihilate them entirely, as he thinks proper;—and can do numberless things in the material creation, which no created power can effectuate. Effects of this kind are all supernatural with regard to us; and, indeed, are so in the most extensive signification of the word: but when we have occasion to speak of them as distinct from the operations of supernatural created agents, we shall call them ivine.

IV. From these observations on nature and its laws, on the several kinds of effects producible in nature, and on the agents that may produce them, it will be no difficult matter to ascertain the proper sense which ought to be affixed to the word Miracle. When we see an, the known laws of nature suspended by the force of a superior known law acting against it; for example, when we see a stone thrown upwards by a man's hand, or when we see any effect produced for which we know an adequate natural cause, this does not suprise us because we see a sufficient natural cause of the effect produced. But were we to see any of the known laws of nature suspended, without perceiving any cause capable of doing so; for example, were we to see a stone rise of itself from the earth, and fly upwards, or did we see any new effect produced, but were totally ignorant of any natural cause carable of producing

it; for example, if one who never saw nor heard of an eclipse, should hear an astronomer foretel that on such a day, at such an hour, the sun would become dark, and continue so for a certain time; and if he should find this pre-- ediction literally fulfilled at the time appointed; in such cases as these we should be filled with wonder and admiration; this being an affection of the mind, which always arises when we see any extraordinary effect produced and are ' ignorant of an adequate cause producing it. Now, as the word Miracle, according to its etymology, signifies a wonderful thing, or a thing that causes wonder; hence, in its most general sense, it may be used to signify all cases of this kind, whether natural or supernatural; and, in this more loose and general signification, it is not unfrequently used in common conversation, where, in relating or hearing any thing extraordinary or unusual, one is very apt to say, it is a Miracle—it is miraculous! without ever adverting whether it may arise from natural causes or not. But this is not the sense in which it is used when we speak with precision; and if we examine the idea we have of it when we mean a Miracle properly such, and which seems most agreeable to the general sentiments of the Christian world, we shall find. the following observations hold true of it:

1. That it implies an operation, or an effect produced, in this material creation, consequently capable of being known to some one or other of our senses; so that the material sensible creation, to which we give the name of nature, is the subject matter in which miracles are

performed.

2. That this effect must be extraordinary; that is, either directly contrary to the known laws of nature, and to the natural powers and forces in the creatures, which are regulated and determined by those laws, or, that it be beside the usual course of nature, either as to the effect produced, or the manner of producing it. We need only reflect upon our own mind, and we will easily see, that the moment we conceive that any event, however ancommon it may seem, may arise from natural causes.

or is conformable to the usual course of nature, we im-

mediately lose the idea of its being a miracle.

3. That this operation or effect not only be performed by a supernatural agent, but also that we be persuaded there is no natural agent capable of performing it, at least as to the manner in which it is done; for here also we find, on reflecting on what passes within us, that our idea of the miraculous in any event, however extraordinary it may appear, immediately begins to cease the moment we suspect that it may be performed by natural agents.

4. That this supernatural agent be either God himself, or his holy angels commissioned by him. In the Christian theology, there is no doubt, but the devil and his wicked spirits can, by their natural strength and abilities, perform many extraordinary things in the material creation; yet certain it is, as the same theology assures us, and as we shall afterwards see in its prope place,* that Almighty God will never permit them to exert this power in such a manner that their operations could not be distinguished from those of God himself, or of his good angels. One idea which the Christian world has constantly affixed to miracles, is, that they are the seal and language of God, by which he speaks to the heart of man; and Christians have always been convinced that God never will permit Satan so to usurp this seal, or so to speak in this language, as to be undiscoverably taken for God himself; but that all the extraordinary operations he is ever permitted to perform in the material world, are attended with such circumstances either in the things done, the end proposed, or the manner of performing them, as evidently manifest the source whence they flow. firm persuasion is solidly grounded upon the prediction of our Saviour, concerning the extraordinary signs and wonders that will be performed towards the end of the world by talse Christs and false prophets, through the agency of Satan, whose ministers these are, and which

^{*} See Chap. X, on the Criterion

signs, he tells us, will be so many and so great at that time, "as to lead, if it were possible, even the elect into error," which expression evidently shows, that though those signs and wonders will be exceedingly great, yet the delusion will not be so complete, but tha tthe elect will discover it, and will not be deceived by them. Now, so strongly is it impressed in the idea Christians have of miracles, that they are the work of God, or of his good angels only, that as soon as they suspect any extraordinary event to be the work of Satan, they immediately lose all thought of it as a miracle. They call it a juggle, an illusion, a prodigy, an enchantment, and the like; or, as such operations are emphatically termed in the holy writ, lying signs and wonders; but their notion of a miracle is only conceived of such extraordinary effects as they believe to be the work of God. or of good angels commissioned by him.

V. These observations being premised, the definition of a miracle, according to the Christian idea of the word, naturally follows, namely that it is "an extraordinary effect produced in the material creation, either contrary to the known laws of nature, or beyond the usual course of nature, above the abilities of natural agents, and performed either by God himself, or by his holy angels."

VI. It is true that words are but arbitrary signs, and every one is at liberty to affix what idea he pleases to any word he uses, provided he explains his meaning, so that he may be understood. I am, therefore, far from blaming any other writer who has given us an idea of the word Miracle, different from what I have here laid down. If he understood that word, according to the idea he gives of it, why not? And, for this reason I have abstained from examining the several definitions given of miracles by others, and from pointing cut what may seem to me defective or proper in them. But as the miracles which belong to the Christian religion, are realities which have actually existed in the world, they must have some

properties peculiar to themselves, by which we can con ceive an idea of them, and by which they can be distinguished from what they are not. These properties I have endeavoured to investigate, according to what seems to have been the most universally received notion of the Christian world about them, and the most conformable to the doctrine of the holy scriptures, as will afterwards more fully appear; and from these properties I have composed my definition of the word Miracle, as here laid down. If this definition be exact, and such as conveys to the mind an adequate idea of what is meant by a Miracle, according to the Christian revelation, then it must follow of course, that those writers who have assigned to that word different significations, comprehending other things than what Christianity understands by it, or defective in what the scripture idea of it contains, have not had Christian miracles for the subject of their inquiries, but ideas of their own, which perhaps have no real object existing that corresponds to them. Thus, when Mr. Hume give us his idea of a miracle, and tells us, "That a miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature, by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some invisible agent;" it is evident, that, in this sense of the word, no such thing as a miracle can be; for, as Dr. Campbell justly observes, the word transgression invariably denotes a criminal opposition to authority; this God Almighty is here represen ted as guilty of in working a miracle, which is an evident impossibility. Also, if the miracle be wrought by an invisible created agent, in performing it this agent's guilty of the crime of acting in opposition to the divire will. What monstrous absurdities must necessarily follow from such ideas of a miracle as these! If, therefore, Mr. Hume, or others who have substituted for miracles, the ideas of their own fancy, which have no corresponding object in nature, have from these drawn con clusions, which the Christian religion abhors and condemns, we need not be surprised: these conclusions may naturally flow from the principles they have laid down

out Christianity cannot be affected by them. For, though these writers insidiously use the same word Miracle to denote their ideas, as Christians do to denote real miracles, yet, as what the former mean by it is so widely different from what the Christian revelation understands by that word, it is plain that their reasonings and conclusions cannot in the least degree affect Christian miracles, or

Christianity.

VII. Before leaving this subject, I must observe, for the further illustration of the above definition of a miracle, that there are some Christian authors of no small note, who have defined that word in a more limited manner than I have done, excluding all created agents, and understanding by it only such extraordinary operations as require the arm of the Almighty to perform them.--The reasons they assign are two; first, that when an angel performs any thing unusual to us in this material creation, it is no less conformable to nature than if it were to be done by a man; nor is it in the least surprising or wonderful to those spiritual beings, who see and know the cause performing it; for the angel in this case only acts according to his natural power, and produces an effect naturally corresponding thereto: Secondly, because the sacred scripture expressly attributes miracles to God only. Thus, "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who only doth wonderful things."* Also, "For thou art great, and doth wondrous things; thou art God alone."† Again, "To him alone who doth great wonders: for his mercy endureth forever." Add to these, "The works of the Highest only are wonderful." § Hence they conclude, that those operations only are to be admitted as miracles which are peculiar to Almighty power, and can be done by none but God. But it doe not appear from these reasons, that this is the idea the Christian world has always had of miracles, or even that this is the real notion which the scripture itself gives of

Psal, lxxii, 18.

[†] Psal. lxxxvi. 10

[‡] Psal. cxxxvi. 4. § Eccles. xi. 4.

them. For, according to this limited sense of the word, several remarkable effects related as miraculous in the scripture, and yet performed by angels, and many others evidently within the power of angels, which fully answer all the purposes of miracles, would be entirely excluded as miracles; nor could they be esteemed as such. It would doubtless be thought a very great miracle, should a man stand in the fire and not be touched by it, as was the case with the three children in the fiery furnace, and yet the scripture declares that this was done by the ministry of an angel; in like manner the deliverance of Daniel from the hungry lions is justly esteemed miraculous, and yet that prophet himself declared, that "God had sent his angel and shut up the lions' mouths that they had not power to hurt him." Now, both these miracles produced the full effects intended by them, in convincing two heathen princes that Almighty God alone was the Supreme Lord and Master of all things, as much as if they had been the immediate operations of God himself; yet they, as well as numbers of others, cannot be admitted as miracles, if the above limited sense of that word be adopted. However, as there is doubtless a very great difference between any operation which can be performed by the ordinary ability of any created agent, and such as can only be done by the Almighty hand of the Creator, it is most reasonable to make a distinction between them. We shall afterwards see that it is necessary to observe this distinction, especially when we come to consider the criterion of Miracles. Those miraculous operations which can be performed by created agents, we shall name relative Miracles; because, though they be real . Miracles with relation to man, as being superior to the utmost abilities of all natural agents, and quite out of the ordinary course of nature in this material creation; yet they are not so with relation to the angels, for to them they are effects produced by an adequate cause, which in that order of beings is altogether natural. Those miracles which can be performed by none but God, we shall

call absolute Miracles, because they are real miracles with relation to all creatures, and above the natural abilities of all created beings whatsoever. This plain and obvious distinction will fully answer the argument brought above from reason, in order to prove that nothing ought to be esteemed a miracle but what requires an Almighty power to perform it. In order to reconcile the scripture with itself, in regard to those texts above cited, which attribute the working of wonderful things to God alone, while at the same time the depriving fire of its power to burn, and the shutting up the mouths of furious lions (both which are surely most wonderful things), are by the same scriptures attributed to the agency of angels; we must say, either that the above-mentioned texts speak only of absolute Miracles, which are peculiar to God alone, or, if both kinds are to be understood, the meaning is, that God alone doth wonderful things, either immediately by his own hand, or by the ministry of his holy angels, who never do any such wondrous things unless when commissioned and authorized by him.

VIII. We shall now conclude this explanation of the nature of miracles, by taking a view of their different kinds, which will easily appear from the description we

have here given of them.

First, Then, if we consider the nature of the miraculous effect performed, we find two kinds of miracles specially different in this respect from one another; the one being a suspension of some of the known laws of nature; and those of this kind we call Miracles contrary to the laws of nature, because they are effects produced quite contrary to what those laws require. Miraculous effects of the other kind not being contrary to any of these laws, but being new and unusual operations performed in nature beyond the abilities of any natural agent, we call Miracles out of, or beyond, the ordinary course of nature.

Secondly, If we consider the miraculousness itself which enters into these operations, this will give us two other kinds of miracles no less distinct than the former, to wit, such as are altogether miraculous and supernat-

wal, both in the thing done and in the manner of doing it; and such as are miraculous and supernatural only in the manner of performing it, but where the thing itself is natural, and may be brought about by natural means.

Thirdly, If we consider the agents by whom miracles are wrought, we shall find another division of them into relative Miracles, which can be performed by the natural ability of supernatural created agents, and absolute Miracles, which exceed all created powers, and can be done by none but the great Creator.

CHAPTER II.

On the Agency of Spiritual Beings in the Material Creation.

I. Before we proceed to other particulars concerning miracles, it will be necessary to consider what idea the holy scriptures give us of the powers of supernatural created beings in acting upon matter, and of their agency in this world. The knowledge of this will still more illustrate the explanation we have given of miracles, and will facilitate our understanding of the doctrine contained in those sacred writings concerning them. I observed above, that it is from revelation only that we know for certain the existence of spiritual beings, and consequently it is only from the same source we derive all that we can possibly know about their nature, qualiies, powers, and operations. It is, therefore, unjustifi able in the adversaries of Christianity, wantonly to deny the existence of such beings, or that they have any communication with the affairs of men; and, from this groundless supposition, pretend to ridicule and argue against Christianity and its miracles. For, if the existence and agency of spirits in nature be the manifest doctrine of the holy scriptures, it is altogether unreasonable

in them to deny this doctrine, while they cannot disprove the divinity of those sa red writings which contain it. It is no less unjustifiable in certain pretended friends of Christianity, to allege, that what the holy fathers and primitive Christians taught concerning the agency or spiritual beings in the material creation, was solely owing to their attachment to the heathen mythology, and was the remains of what they had believed about demons before their conversion; whereas, we not only find, that what they taught concerning spirits was entirely conformable to the holy scriptures, but that these very scriptures are cited by them to prove this doctrine, and are the sources whence they profess to draw it. It is still more unjustifiable in Christians themselves, who receive the sacred scriptures as divinely inspired, to call in question what is there clearly delivered concerning spiritual beings and their agency in nature, and to pervert the plain and obvious meaning of the text on this subject, rather than give up some favourite preconceived opinion of their own, or the darling pretence of being above what they call the prejudice of vulgar minds, and of being men of superior wit and greater strength of mind than the rest of mankind. A plain view of what is contained in the word of God, will at once show the folly of such a behaviour.

II. The belief of the agency of spiritual beings in the material world, has varied considerably within these last two hundred years. About the beginning of the Reformation, the Catholics urged the invincible weight of miracles wrought in their communion, as proofs of the truth of what they taught, and consequently as the strongest confutation of the tenets of the reformation. The first reformers, who had not yet found out Dr. Middleton's expeditious answer to all pleas of this kind, and who could not deny the reality of the facts alleged, did not hesitate to attribute them all to the agency of Satan, and willingly allowed a most unbounded power of this kind, even to wicked spirits, during what they called the reign of Papacy. Some time after, when Deism and Free-thinking became more prevalent and formed a very

numerous body, the gentlemen of that class found it very inconvenient to admit the belief of devils at all; for devils, hell, eternity, and the like, are extremely incompatible with the main articles of their belief, and still more so with their morality: these tenets, therefore, were altogether discarded by them, and they resolved all miracles into juggling tricks, and human imposture.* But this plea being unable to support itself to the full satisfaction of all serious inquirers, some of them have thought fit to shift that ground, and feeling, on the one hand, many miraculous effects alleged, which could not possibly be attributed to the art of man, and, on the

* This observation, also, applies to the modern school of Protestant interpreters of scripture in Germany, at the head of which stand the names of the Rev. Professors Semler, Bauer, Paulus, Wegscheider, Eichhorn, and others. They assert that the miracles recorded in the scriptures are merely natural occurrences, exaggerated and embellished by those that related them. Thus Eichhorn represents the history of the Mosaic legislation at Mount Sinai, in a manner divested of all miraculous characteristics. He says that Moses ascended to the top of Sinai, and kindled a fire there—a fire consecrated to the worship of God—before which he prayed. Here a tremendous thunder-storm occurred, and he seized the occasion to proclaim the laws which he composed, as the statutes of Jehovah! In like manner, C. F. Ammon who was formerly professor of theology at Erlangen, tells us, in respect to the miracle of Christ's walking on the water, that "to walk on the sea, is not to stand on the waves, as on the solid ground, (as Jerome dreams) but to walk through the waves so far as the shoals reached and then to swim." So in regard to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, he says, that "Jesus probably distributed some loaves and fishes which he had, to those who were around him; and thus excited, by his example, others among the multitude, who had provisions, to distribute them. in like manner."

Professor Thiess, another divine of the same school, represents the miraculous cure by Peter, of the man who was lame from his birth in a very singular way: "This man," says he, "was lame only according to report. He never walked at all; so the people believed that he could not walk. Peter and John, however, being more sagacious, threatened him. In the name of the Messiah, said they, stand up. The word Messiah had a magical power. He stood up. Now they

saw that he could walk, etc."

The case of Ananias falling down dead is thus represented by the same writer: "Ananias fell down terrified: but probably he was carried out and buried while still alive." Heinrichs, however, another divine of the same school, gives another explanation of the miracle: viz that Peter stabbed Ananias; which, he observes, "does not at all disagree with the vehement and easily exasperated temper of Peter"—See Horne's Introduction, Part II. Book 111. §2.

other hand, not being able to find any colour of reason absolutely to deny the possibility of supernatural agents. they have gladly admitted this possibility, and from it pretend to invalidate the authority of miracles in general, even those of Jesus Christ himself, as well as of his holy apostles. For, say they, how do we know but that all miracles, without exception, may only be the work of different genii or demons, of whom there may be many different degrees? And if the things done be more and less wonderful, this may only be owing to the greater or less degree of strength in the assisting demon. Thus, if Moses performed greater miracles than the magicians of Pharaoh, it only shows that his invisible helper was of a higher order than theirs; and if the miracles of Jesus Christ were above all that had ever been seen in the world before him, it was only owing to the superior abilities of his assisting genius. Now, say they, as this is possible, it may be true, and all miracles may be the work of demons; and if this be the case, in vain do we appeal to miracles as interpositions of the Deity, and proofs of doctrines revealed by him. The futility of this way of arguing will afterwards be seen, and indeed is a natural consequence of what shall be shown when we come to treat of the authority and criterion of miracles. At present I shall only observe, that these various opinions concerning the existence and agency of spiritual beings in this material creation, show clearly that their respective abettors have no solid ground to stand upon; that they adopt these sentiments only at random, and as fancy prompts them; or, at best, that they are forced to embrace them in support of the different systems in which they had been previously engaged, without ever taking the pains to consult the only certain source whence they can be fully informed about these matters, and, indeed, without much care whether their opinions be conformable to what is there taught, or not. There still another system concerning the agency of spiritual beings, lately set forth with great pomp by Mr. Farmer, and differing from all the former. In this it is pretended. that though these beings be of a superior nature to that of man, and may possess, for any thing we know, many qualities and powers of a much more excellent kind than we do, yet their exertion of these powers is limited to their own particular spheres of action for which they are adapted; that they naturally have no power to act in the material creation; and that, when Almighty God is, at any time, pleased to employ them as his agents in performing any thing miraculous among men, it is not sufficient that he order or authorize them to do so, but it is also necessary that he impart to them a special extraordinary power, not otherwise competent to their nature, in order to enable

them to perform what he so commands.

III. In confutation of these, and all such assumed hypotheses concerning these matters, it will be sufficient to lisplay the doctrine of the holy scriptures in their own words, where we shall find the following truths clearly and plainly declared to us by the authority of God himself. 1. That spiritual beings, whether good or bad angels, have in their own natures an inherent power to act in this material creation: that they can move, dispose of, and affect bodies in many different ways; and that their strength is exceeding great, far superior to any thing we know or can conceive in this world; so that they are capable of performing many things, truly miraculous in our eyes, and far above the ability of all natural agents. 2. That evil spirits have ar implacable hatred both to God and man; and in consequence of this are most desirous of themselves to exert this their natural strength, for the hurt and destruction of man and to perform great signs and wonders, in order, by their means, the more effectually to delude and deceive 3. That, however, in the present dispensation of ! Providence, their malice is very much restrained by Almighty God, who never allows them to exert their natural abilities for the hurt of mankind, but only in such manner and degree as he pleases, for his own wise ends and purposes; to wit, either for the good of mankind, according to the views of his mercy, or for the punishment of their sins, according to the order of his justice: and this restraint

cappears, (as we shall afterwards see) both from the nature of the things they are allowed to do, and from the manner and other circumstances attending the doing of them.-4. That good angels have, on many occasions, had communications with men, and have often done remarkable and extraordinary things on their account, and at their desire namely, by divine appointment for the benefit and consolation of God's friends and servants. 5. That wicked spirits also have, by God's permission, had frequent communication with men, and have often done extraordinary things at their desire, and by their means, for most wicked ends on their part, although justly and wisely permitted by Almighty God, for his own most righteous views and purposes. Each of these heads we shall now illustrate separately, from the plain declaration of the holy scriptures, and afterwards make a short inquiry into the manner in which spiritual beings have in this material world, power to do things that appear to us miraculous.

IV. As the first of these heads is of the greatest importance, and must be well established, I shall be the more explicit upon it, and shew that spiritual beings not only can act upon matter, but that they can act upon all different parts of matter, upon things on the surface of the earth and in the air, upon the bodies of animals, upon their health and life, and upon the mind of man; that they can move bodies, change their parts and appearances, and dispose and affect them several other ways, and that they have very great strength to do all this. The proofs of this from the holy scripture are of the most convincing kind, and void of all ambiguity, consisting of repeated facts related in the sacred oracles; by which it is · evident, beyond reply, that spirits have this power from their actual exertion of it. With regard to their strength in general, the angels are represented to us as excelling in it; "Bless the Lord," says the royal prophet, "ye his angels that excel in strength;" or, as the Hebrew expresses it, "mighty in strength." St Peter assures

us, that the "angels are greater in power and might than men," and on this account they are called in scripture "Dominations, Virtues, Powers."- This great strength of theirs also appears from the force the devils communicate sometimes to those whom they possess: thus we are told in the gospel of one of those possessed people, that he "had his dwelling among the tombs, and no man could bind him, no not with chains, because he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces "† Now, that spiritual beings can exert this power by acting upon matter, is evident from the following instances: An angel wrestled with Jacob; the two angels that were sent to destroy Sodom "put forth their hand and pulled Lot into the house," to deliver him. from the fury of the people; "and they shut the door and smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both great and small "! The angel Gabriel several times touched Daniel, and set him upright, when he had fallen flat on the ground with fear. angel came down and rolled away the stone, for it was very great, from the door of the sepulchre." When the apostles were thrown into prison, "the angel of the Lord, by night, opened the prison doors and brought them forth." And the angel that delivered St. Peter out of prison, smote him on the side, and awakened him. These facts plainly demonstrate that spiritual beings can act upon matter, touch it, move it, and in different ways dispose of it; all which will still further appear from the following examples of the several parts of nature wherein their power has been exercised. 1. In things upon the surface of the earth we find that the devil turned the rods of the magicians into serpents; turned water into blood, and brought up frogs. This is not the place for inquiring into the manner how this was done; we only consider the fact, which proves to a demonstration

^{* 2} Peter, ii. 11. † Mark v.

[‡] Gen. xix. 10. § Dan. viii. ix. x.

the agency of wicked spirits upon material objects, even to a very high degree, in whatever manner the change, whether real or apparent, was effected. The same scrip--ture that relates these facts, relates that they were done by enchantment, and in opposition to God; they were, therefore, the operations of wicked spirits. 2. With regard to their agency in the air, we are told that the devil sent a great wind, which threw down the house where . Job's children were convened, and destroyed them; and that he sent down fire and lightning from heaven, which consumed Job's sheep and their keepers. From the power which these wicked spirits have in the air, St. Paul calls the devil "the prince of the power of the air."* And again he says, that our spiritual enemies are "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world." † 3. We find that they can inflict diseases upon the bodies of men; thus "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown."+ And our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that the poor crooked woman whom he cured upon the Sabbath, and who for eighteen years had never been able to raise herself up, had been kept bound for so long a time in this miserable manner by the devil: "Ought not this woman," says he, "being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years! be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?" § Of those people who were possessed by the devil, as related in the gospel, some he made dumb, some deaf, and some he threw into fits, tormenting them most miserably, and endeavouring even to destroy them, by causing them to fall sometimes into the fire, and sometimes into water. We are also told that "an angel of the Lord smote Herod, because he gave not glory to God;" and that he died in a few days of a most loathsome disease, "being consumed with worms." 4. It further appears, from the same sacred

Ephes. ii. 2.Ephes. vi. 12.

[‡] Job ii. 7. § Luke xiii. 16.

records, that spiritual beings can take away the life of man, and of other animals: thus Satan destroyed Job' children and his cattle; a devil killed Sarah's seven husbands; the destroying angel, in the course of a singl night, killed all the first-born of Egypt, both man and beast. "An angel of the Lord went forth and smote, in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred and fourscore and five thousand."* The two angels entertained by Lot told him, "we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxing great before the face of the Lord, and. the Lord hath sent us to destroy it."† The devils that entered into the herd of swine drowned them all in the sea; and the angel that withstood Balaam's journey declared to him, that he would surely have killed him it the ass had not turned out of the way from him. ‡ 5. That wicked spirits have power and abilities to tempt men to sin, both by external occasions, and by exciting bad ideas in their minds, is, and always has been, an article of Christian faith most clearly laid down in holy writ. As to external temptation, we find the devil, at the beginning, either taking upon himself the appearance of a serpent, or entering into that creature, and making use of its organs to converse with Eve, thereby tempting and seducing her to sin. In like manner, when our blessed Saviour was pleased, for our consolation and example, to allow the devil to tempt him, wicked spirits appeared to him visibly, spoke to him, and carried him up to a pinnacle of the temple, and to the top of a very high mountain; and St. Paul, writing to the 'I hessalonians, says, "We would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again, but Satan hindered us." And on another occasion tells us, that "an angel of Satan was given to buffet him." With regard to his internal temptations, the scripture tells us, "that he taketh away the word of God out of our hearts." That he "blinds the minds of them that believe not." That he "transforms.

^{*} Isaiah xxxvii. 36.

[†] Gen. xix. 13.

¹ Num. xxii.

^{§ 1} Thes. ii. 18. || Luke viii. 12. ¶ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

himself into an angel of light,"* on purpose the more easily to deceive us. That "he goes about like a roaring lion seeking to devour us."† That he is "the old serpent, who is called the devil, and Satan who seduces the whole earth." These texts are clear, and need no application, but expressly show how great the strength of wicked spirits is, to act upon our organs, both external and internal, and even upon our whole persons. 6. As for the agency of good angels, all the scriptures are full of the most convincing examples of it. Besides what we have seen above, we are assured in these sacred writings, that these holy "angels are ministering spirits, sent for the ministry of those who are the heirs of salvation." That "God has given them charge over us to keep us in all our ways;" and that "they carry us in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone." That they "encamp round about those that fear God and deliver them." \\$\P\$ That an "angel delivered Jacob from all evil." ** That "an angel brought bread and water to Elijah in the wilderness."++ That an angel deprived the fire of all its power of burning or touching the three children who were thrown into the fiery furnace by the king of Babylon: That an angel shut up the mouths of the hungry lions, so that they could not hurt Daniel: That an angel delivered St. Peter out of prison, before whom the iron gate opened of its own accord, as if sensible of the presence and power of that Heavenly being. Now, let any one seriously consider these facts, so plainly narrated in the word of God, and say, do they not present the most convincing proofs of the great power and strength which these spiritual beings have to act, and do many things in every part of this material creation. For, we must observe, the question here is not, how far the wit of man may wrest any particular expression of scripture, to a sense very opposite to its natural meaning; but,

^{* 2} Cor. xi. 14. 1 Pet. v. 8.

[†] Rev. xii. 9.

Heb. i. 14.

Psal. xci. T Psal. xxxiv

^{**} Gen. xlviii.

tt 1 Kings ziz.

whether or not the plain, natural, obvious meaning of all the above texts, does imprint in the mind the strong est conviction of the agency of spiritual beings in this material creation.

Upon the whole, then, I must make the following remarks: 1. That it is a truth plainly and repeatedly revealed by God in his holy scriptures; that spiritual beings, namely, both good and bad angels, have great strength and power to act upon bodies in this material world, in many different ways; and that they often do actually exert this power. 2. That this strength is natural to them, and inherent in them as spiritual beings; for, in all the above testimonies of holy writ, there is not the most distant insinuation to the contrary; nay, in many of the above examples, the evil spirits exert their power in opposition to God; and it would be impious to suppose, that, in these cases, he gives them an extraordinary power, not conformable to their natures, to enable them to fight against himself. 3 That it is most shameful for any one who pretends to the name of a Christian to assert, that the doctrines taught by the holy fathers concerning the agency of spirits, are nothing but the remains of heathenism 4. That as it is only from Revelation we can know any thing for certain about the existence of spirits, and their agency on material beings; and as revelation is so clear and explicit upon that head, it is most ridiculous for any one to pretend to argue from reason against it. Reason has no data to go upon, either for or against the existence of spirits, or their agency; nay, the analogy from our own soul, and its agency upon the body is evidently in favour of both. For seeing that we have the most feeling conviction, by interior consciousness, that our soul, though a spirit, acts upon our body, it is thence evident that a spirit can act upon matter; and will any one dare to assert, that the only way by which the Almighty can communicate to spirits this power of acting upon bodies, is by uniting them in one principle, as our souls and bodies are? Since, then, the fact that spiritual beings can and do act

in numberless ways on the material creation, is as repeatedly affirmed by the word of God, that there is not in the whole scripture the least insinuation to the contrary, with what colour of reason can it be called in question, at least by any one who believes the scriptures? That spiritual beings then do act on bodies, is evidently a revealed truth; how they do so we do not comprehend, because God has not been pleased to reveal it to us; but our ignorance of this can be no more a reason for denying the fact itself, than it would be a reason to deny the action of the soul upon the body, because how this is performed we do not comprehend more than we do the other. That one particle of matter acts upon another, even at a distance, by the powers of gravity and attraction, is a point that will readily be allowed by all Newtonian philosophers; and, indeed, it is a fundamental principle of that philosophy. How this comes to pass, we cannot possibly conceive. Those who have attempted to explain it mechanically have only bewildered themselves to no purpose, and have been forced at last to end in the very same difficulty which they attempted to explain. Hence the most judicious, both among divines and philosophers, have resolved this power of attraction so universally diffused in every particle of matter, to an immediate act of the will of the Creator, impressed upon matter by way of a law; by which it is ordained, that all particles of matter, when within certain distances, should act upon one another by attraction, and produce all the various effects we see consequent thereunto. And is it not equally easy for the came Almighty will to make a similar law between spirits and bodies,—that the latter should be subjected to the former, and such effects be produced in them as spiritual beings should intend and attempt to produce in them? The possibility of this cannot be called in question, even in sound philosophy; and since revelation assures us of the fact itself, it is most unphilosophical to pretend to argue from reason against it. Upon the whole, then, we must conclude that supernatural created

agents have a very ample and extensive power inherent in their natures, and competent to them as spiritual beings, to act upon matter throughout every part of nature; in consequence of which, they can move bodies, alter their parts, suspend their qualities and natural effects, and perform numberless operations in them superior to the abilities of all natural agents, and therefore real mir-

acles with respect to us.

V. Having thus solidly established the first of the five heads proposed above to be shown on the present subject, I proceed now to consider the others, which will be more briefly discussed. The second point, namely, that evil spirits, from their malice and hatred to God and man, are most desirous to exert their strength for the destruction of man, is in the plainest terms declared to us by the word of God, and is indeed the foundation of some of the most important rules of morality in the Christian religion. Besides what we have said above about the devil's power to tempt man to sin—which is the most effectual way to destroy him - where we have seen how active he is in this infernal employment, we are also assured, that "by the envy of the devil, death entered into the world;"* and our blessed Saviour himself declares, that "the devil was a murderer from the beginning;"† and St. Peter compares his rage and fury against us to that of a roaring lion seeking to devour us, continually going about, and always on the watch to seize every opportunity of doing so. Our Saviour shows the same thing in another very strong light, when he said to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee."; And it was only by this prayer that the desire of Satan was disappointed, and his infernal design against the apostle frustrated. All these expressions, together with what we observed above, about diaholical temptations, show beyond a reply, how good a will the devil has to ruin and destroy man, both soul and body; and,

[·] Wisd. ii.

consequently, that he would undoubtedly do so, were not his power restrained by Almighty God, and a bound set to his malice. This restraint put upon the power of Satan, which was the third point mentioned above, is no less plainly delivered in holy writ than the two former. The Egyptian magicians, at whose desire the devil turned the rods into serpents, and the water into blood, and even brought up frogs, could not by their enchantments bring up lice: the devil's power was here restrained, and the magicians were forced to confess that this was the finger of God. We see no reason why the devil, by his natural abilities, might not have brought up lice as well as frogs; the one appears every way as easy to be done as the other, in whatever manner he be supposed to have performed it; but it was now time for God to show himself master; and, therefore, though he allowed Satan to imitate the former miracles of Moses, yet he thought proper now to restrain his power, and put an end to the contest, by securing the victory to himself and his holy servant. Notwithstanding the rage and hatred Satan had against Job, which appears from the whole history and from the manner he treated him when he was allowed to do so, yet, till he was so allowed, he could not so much as touch one thing that belonged to him. And it is to be observed, that when the Lord gave this permission to Satan, there is not the least hint of giving him any extraordinary strength to enable him to hurt Job, but a plain insinuation of his having sufficient strength already for that purpose. The authority conveyed to Satan by the expression used by God, plainly implies leave to exercise his own natural strength, first upon Job's goods, and afterwards upon his person, at his own pleasure: "Behold," said Almighty God, "all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thy hand."* And afterwards, "Behold," says God, "he is in thine hand, but save his life."† In both these expressions, the restricting clause plainly shows the nature of the leave given to Satan, and what he could further have done by his own natural strength, ha.i not that clause been added. In like manner, though the devil killed the seven husbands of Sarah, yet he had no power to touch young Tobias; and when the angel Raphael explained this matter to him, he said to him, 'Hear me, and I will tell you who those are over whom the devil can prevail; for they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding; over them the devil hath power."* Here we see, that it is not any extraordinary access of strength given to Satan, which enables him to hurt men, but our own sins, which depriving us of the friendship of God, and making us slaves of the devil, give him power over us, and permission to exercise his natural strength against us. What our Saviour told St. Peter, that "Satan desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat," not only shows the rage of that wicked spirit against the servants of God, but at the same time shows how his power is restrained by divine providence. He desired it-earnestly desired it, but he could do no more, the execution of this desire being prevented by the prayers of Jesus Christ. Nay, what is still more remarkable, when our Saviour relieved the poor man in whom there was a legion of devils, after they had been driven out they durst not so much as enter into the herd of swine till they had asked and received leave to that effect. Lastly, our blessed Saviour not only restrains the power of Satan, and set bounds to his malice, but also gave power to his apostles and disciples to do so; for "he gave them power and authority over all devils." + And we read in the following chapter, that when they had exercised this power, and found the effects of it, they returned and said to their Master with joy, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name;" upon which he renews the grant to them again

saying, "Behold I give you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you:" But to repress all motions of pride or vanity which might arise in their minds on that account, he immediately subjoins, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven."* Now, this manifestly shows that in this present dispensation of providence, the devil's power is kept in great restraint, and such a bound set to his malice against man, as best suits the views and de-

signs of divine wisdom.

We come now to consider the fourth point above proposed, concerning the agency of good angels, and their communication with men; but of this we have already seen several manifest examples and declarations from the sacred scripture, in the sixth proof of the fourth point, to which I refer the reader. I shall only add here one other example, to wit, that of the angel Raphael with Tobias. His whole history is a continued train of services done by that holy angel to those good people, several of which, as well as many of the other examples mentioned above, are operations far superior to the power of any natural agent, and therefore truly miraculous in our eyes. We shall now proceed to consider what the scripture teaches us concerning the agency of evil spirits in particular, and their communication with men.

VI. It is a well known truth in the Christian revelation, that the cause of the ruin of the fallen angels was pride. Dazzled with their own super-eminent excellencies, they forgot the hand from whom they had received them, and arrogated to themselves that glory which belonged only to their great Creator. Banished out of heaven on this account, and condemned to eternal misery in punishment of their crime, they did not become wiser by their fall, but were rather the more confirmed in their pride, and hardened in that unhappy ambition. To see

^{*} Luke x. 17, 19, 20.

man, a creature composed of the dust of the earth, and so much inferior to them in the dignity of their nature, created in such a happy state, and destined by the Almighty to fill up those places which they had lost in heaven, was a mortification which their pride and envy could not endure; they therefore resolved on his destruction, and unhappily accomplished it. Having by this means brought man in subjection to themselves, and being continually pushed on by their pride to put themselves on a level with their Maker, they have, since the very beginning, used every endeavour to get themselves honoured as gods by deluded mortals, and to imitate, among their votaries, whatever Almighty God was pleased to ordain for his own glory among his servants. Hence we find that, throughout the whole heathen, world, the devils had their temples, their altars, their priests, their sacrifices, their oracles, their prophets, and even, upon occasions, their miracles also, thereby imitating the works of God, and procuring to themselves the vain homage of worship and adoration on earth, which they could never have found in heaven. From this known disposition of these haughty spirits, it is not surprising to a Christian, that they should endeavour to have their sacraments also, and should enter into compacts with such unhappy mortals as they could delude for this purpose, engaging to perform certain uncommon effects in nature, whenever their votaries should perform, on their part, such exterior signs or actions as should be agreed upon between them for that end. A conduct of this kind would serve to gratify several passions of the human heart, particularly pride, envy and hatred, and would therefore. when proposed to them, be readily agreed to by such unhappy souls, as either knew not God, or had lost all sense and fear of the Deity, and were, by their vices, become slaves to such violent passions; and it would no less gratify the pride of these infernal spirits, to be thus honoured by men, in their having recourse to them for such things as they wanted to be done, instead of applying to the great God that made them. Seeing, therefore, that

spiritual beings, both good and bad, have often appeared to men, and conversed with them on various occasions as the examples above related from holy writ manifestly show—it is clear there is no impossibility that such compacts should be entered into between wicked spirits and men; it is even natural to expect them from the known dispositions both of the one and the other. Now, if such a compact be supposed to be made, in which the devil ordains certain outward actions to be done and engages to perform certain extraordinary effects in nature, whenever these actions are done, as agreed upon; it is plain that the knowledge of the connection between the outward sign and the effect to be produced, may be communicated to others who had not entered into the compact themselves, and by them again be, in like manner, communicated to whomsoever they will. It is also plain, that this knowledge may be imparted to others, merely as a curiosity, or as a secret of nature, without any insinuation that the effect so produced is the work of the devil; nay, as the exterior signs used may even be sacred things, and the words pronounced taken from the holy scriptures, ignorant persons may, by that means, be so far deluded as to look upon the use of these things as lawful or holy, and think they are serving God, while they are honouring the devil. Now, compacts of this kind with wicked spirits, and the using and trusting to their infernal signs for procuring the effect intended, is what is meant in general by the terms, witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, magic, charms, and the like: but as there are different d grees of guilt in the things done, so, strictly speaking. the idea assigned to these terms is different accordingly; for witchcraft and sorcery seem properly to signify the existence in such a compact with wicked spirits, and : having a personal familiar intercourse with them; and those who have this are called witches and sorcerers. Enchantment and the magic art seem rather to imply the knowledge and use of these signs and their effects, knowing them to be from an evil principle, though the persons who use them did not make the compact themselves,

nor had any personal intercourse with the devil, but had learned it from others. Even the scripture speaks of magic as an art: "As for the delusions of art magic, they were put down, and their vaunting of wisdom was reproved with disgrace,"*—speaking of the magicians of Egypt. Now, an art implies a thing taught by one man to another, and it would appear from other parts of scripture, that this art magic was professedly taught among the Egyptians and Chaldeans. (See Daniel, in several places). Charms, spells, and superstitious prac tices, imply the use of these signs, with a confidence in them as curiosities or natural secrets, without knowing, or, at least, without fully adverting to the source whence they originate. Besides these general names, there are also many particular appellations given to the different species of these practices and to those who use them, according to the several effects produced, and the various means used for procuring them, such as diviners, augurs, soothsayers, pythonesses, necromancers, fortune-tellers, and the like.

VII. Deists and Freetninkers turn all these things into ridicule, looking upon them as impossibilities, chimeras, and the fruits of great weakness of mind, and childish credulity. No wonder, for, as they are not willing to allow the existence of the devil, they cannot well admit he has any commerce or communication with men. It is to be observed, however, that infidelity itself has never yet been able to bring the least shadow of a proof why spiritual beings may not exist; or, if they exist, why they may not act in the affairs of this material creation; and all they say on this subject, when stripped of its dress and colouring, is reduced to a sneer and a witticism. In Christianity, the possibility of these diabolical operations can admit of no doubt: that they have often been done, and a communication kept up by their means between wicked spirits and men, is a truth most manifestly revealed in the holy scriptures; and if such intercourse

be possible, and has actually existed in the world, who will be so bold as to pretend to say, it can never exist again? It would, indeed, be very blameable credulity to believe every idle story of this kind; but it would be no less blameable folly to deny the possibility of their existence, when we consider what the word of God teaches of this matter, which we find contained under the following heads: 1. All commerce of this kind, and all connection with those who practise such things, is severely prohibited by Almighty God, as a crime most detestable in his eyes. Thus, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." * "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them."; "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a-whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and cut him off from among his people." ‡ "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them." And "There shall not be found among you any one—that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, for all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord." And, in the new law, witchcraft is reckoned by St. Paul among those works of the flesh, of which those who are guilty, he assures us, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." \(\Pi \) And it is declared, that "murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." ** Now, can any thing be more impious than to suppose, that God Almighty would have made such severe prohibitions of a crime, which not only had no existence in nature, but could not possibly have an existence? Can there be a more blasphemous arraign

^{*} Exod. xxii. 18. † Levit. xix. 31. ‡ Levit. xx. 6.

[§] Levit. xx. 27. || Deut. xviii. 10. || Gal. v

^{**} Revelations xxi 8.

ment of the Divine Wisdom than to suppose it capable of such folly? Besides it is plain from all the above texts, that they speak of the thing as certain, and as actually practised in the world. 2. Those who contrary to this prohibition, were guilty of this crime, are severely condemned by the word of God, and their punishments proposed as monuments of the divine justice against it. Thus, it is expressly declared, that this was one of the principal causes of the ruin and dispersion of the ten tribes: "They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire; they used divinations and enchantments—therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight." * This also is represented as one of the greatest crimes of Manasses, which provoked the wrath of God so highly against him; for "he observed times, and used enchantment, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger." † Here we find the commerce with familiar spirits, and the existence of wizards and witches, expressly affirmed, and this commerce declared to be the crime of which this wicked prince was actually guilty, and for which he incurred the just displeasure of Almighty God. Now, can any one who believes the scriptures deny the reality, much less the possibility of these things? 3. Those good princes who, in obedience to the divine command, put away those who dealt in these impieties, and discouraged all such wicked practices, are highly praised in the holy scriptures for so doing. Thus it is recorded in praise of Saul, who at the beginning was an excellent prince, that "he had put away those that had similiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." ‡ And among the many good things that Josiah did, it is particularly observed of him, that "the workers with similar spirits and the wizards—and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the

inw." * Now how could they be put away if they had ao existence? And how can their existence be called in question without denying the scripture? 4. We find several examples in scripture of particular persons who dealt in those practices to a very great degree, and which shews to what a length the power of Satan is sometimes permitted to go, in doing things extraordinary by means of those his agents. Thus the magicians of Egypt are expressly affirmed to have performed prodigies similar to the miracles of Moses, by their enchantments; the witch of Endor also is particularly taken notice of as a person who had such intercourse with wicked spirits; and in the New Testament, every one knows of Simon the magician, of whom we are told, that, for some time before Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel there, he had "in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one;" † and so many and great were the wonders he did among them, whether real or only apparent, that "to him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God; and to him they had regard, because that for a long time he had bewitched them with his sorceries." Here we not only see an example of one guilty of this diabolical commerce to a very great degree, but we also find, that such people are sometimes permitted to hurt others, to bewitch and delude them by their sorceries. We also read of Elymas, another magician, who opposed the preaching of the gospel by St. Paul, whom that great apostle struck blind for his impiety, and called him "full of all subtlety, and all mischief, and child of the devil, and enemy of all righteousness, who did not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord," ‡ In these words the apostle gives us the true character of all such people, and the light in which they stand in the eyes of the great God that made them. We must not omit here the voung woman "possessed with a spirit of divination, which

^{* 2} Kings, xxii. 24.

brought her masters much gain by soothsaying," who was dispossessed by St. Paul, as we read in Acts xvi. 16. Let any serious Christain attentively consider these repeated testimonies of the word of God on the agency of evil spirits in this material creation, and say if he thinks it possible to express the actual existence of these diabolical operations, and of the interposition of wicked spirits with the affairs of men, in clearer and stronger terms than is heredone; and consequently, if it would not be the height of impiety to deny a truth so strongly, so repeatedly, and so clearly affirmed in these sacred oracles. It is, therefore, undeniable, according to the Christian revelation. that wicked spirits often have had a communication with men; that they have great power and strength, natural to them as spirits, for performing many extraordinary things in this material creation; and that they have often exerted this power at the desire, and by means of those who had intercourse and communication with them.

VIII. Here perhaps a question may be proposed, Are there any people at present in the world who are guilty of these practices? In answer to which, it must be observed, that it neither makes for nor against my argument, whether there be or not; it is enough for me to have shown, that the agency of these infernal beings, is a truth revealed by God in the holy scriptures. However, as the above question is curious, and it may be agreeable to my readers to have a just and proper solution of it, I would observe: 1. That there have been such people in the world who have had compacts and familiar per sonal commerce, with wicked spirits, is undoubted; the word of God affirms it, gives several examples of those who have practised these crimes, and makes severe laws 2. That there may be such people still against them. in the world cannot be denied; what has been, may be; and the prohibition of these crimes, which we find in the New Testament, where they are condemned as grievous sins, evidently supposes that they may be found even among Christians. 3. That these people are as frequent among Christians, as the vulgar, and illiterate

commonly imagine, is surely false; for it is certain the devil's power is much abridged and restrained wherever the gospel is preached; and among the many glorious promises made by Almighty God to the church, and fore-told by the prophets, this is one, "I will take away sorce ies out of the land, and there shall be no divinations in thee," * which words at least imply, that these things will be less frequent under the gospel; that the devil will not be allowed to delude the people to such a degree as in former times; and that men will not be so much given to these abominations 4. That there are, or may be, many who attempt to have a commerce with wicked spirits, is very possible; because it is very natural to suppose, that the passions of men will push them on to such extremes; and because those who are charged with the care of souls know it from experience, as this case does sometimes actually come before them. 5. As for those who have no personal intercourse with spiritual beings, but who use charms and superstitious practices in order to procure some end proposed, whether they know and reflect that these are diabolical inventions, or do not regard them as such, it is certain that numbers of them are to be found, especially among the lower class of people in all countries.

IX. From what has been said then, it is evident, that nothing is more certain, according to the Christian revelation, than the existence of spiritual beings, both good and bad, and their agency in nature; that they are endowed with very great power and many qualities superior to man, and of course can do many things in the material creation, which will be truly miraculous with relation to us, and above the abilities of all natural agents. We shall now briefly inquire in what manner they perform these miraculous operations; at least, so far, as the light of reason, and the knowledge we have of their nature and qualities from revelation, can afford us information concerning this matter. And, first, as the scrip-

ture every where represents these beings to us, as exceedingly strong ("mighty in strength," as the Psalmist expresses it), they must be able to perform many things in suspending the usual effects of the laws of nature and the like, far superior to any thing that can be performed by any natural agent. Again, the agility of angelical beings is doubtless exceedingly great, so that they can transport themselves from one place to another with the most amazing velocity, far superior to any thing we can conceive in bodies. We may form some idea of this by considering, that the light of the sun, though a bodily substance, has such an immense velocity, as to arrive at the earth in less than ten minutes' time; and the electric fluid would go round the globe in one-seventh of a second, if it were possible to fix a wire conductor for that purpose round the globe. If, therefore, spirits can move themselves with much greater velocity than bodies, with what inconceivable quickness must these beings be able to transport themselves from one part of the world to another? On this account, they will also be able to do many things truly miraculous; both by communicating intelligence of what is doing at a distance to men, almost instantaneously, and also by transporting bodies to distant places with the greatest velocity; of this last we have a remarkable example in Daniel, where we are told, that when that holy prophet was for the second time put into the den of lions, and had got no meat for some considerable space of time, the prophet Habbakkuk in Judea, some hundreds of miles distant from him, going out in the morning to the field with a mess of pottage to the reapers, an angel of God caught him by the hair of the head, and in an instant carried him to Daniel in the den with the pottage and, when Daniel had eaten the pottage, brought him back again in the same manner to provide more for his reapers.* It is true, this chapter of Daniel is not found in the Hebrew, and on that account is thrown into the Apocrypha by the Protestants; but it has, from the earliest ages.

been received by the Catholic church as divine scripture, and its authority as an ancient history is not called in question. Tertullian, speaking of the velocity with which spirits transport themselves from one place to another, expresses himself thus: "Every spirit is winged; both angels and demons are so; on that account they are every where in a moment; the whole world is one place to them; they know where any thing is doing as easily as

thev can declare it."*

X. The great knowledge possessed by spiritual beings is another prerogative which enables them to do many things above the abilities of natural agents, and that in different respects: 1. Experimental philosophy has, for some time past, been making daily improvements, and discovering more and more of the wonderful powers of nature, as appears particularly in the discoveries made in magnetism and electricity; and it cannot be doubted, but that there are many more secrets in nature, of which mankind are still totally ignorant. Spiritual beings have doubtless a much greater knowledge of these things than men, and consequently are capable of producing many extraordinary effects in the material creation, which, from our ignorance of these powers of nature, would appear to us most astonishing. But, as all they can do of this kind, is only by putting these powers of nature in action, and as these must have time to perform their effects, such extraordinary things cannot be instantaneous, even with all the strength of spiritual beings. Hence, miraculous operations, which are merely the effect of strength or agility, or which are done by the application of natural means, and require time to produce them, are known by these circumstances to be within the reach of the natural abilities of spirits, and therefore cannot of themselves alone give proof of a divine interposition. 2. From this more intimate knowledge that spiritual beings have of all the powers and

[†] Omnis spiritus ales; hoc et angeli et dæmones. Igitur momento ubique sunt. Totus orbis locus illis unus est. Quid ubi geratur, tam facile sciunt quam enuntiant.—Tert. Aplo.

properties of material agents, which are entirely hidden . from us, they may, no doubt, be able to foresee many natural effects which will necessarily result from these powers when applied to action and from their necessary or occasional combinations; and this they may know for a considerable time before these effects actually happen, especially when they themselves are going to set these powers in action. Now, if they should communicate this their foreknowledge of these necessary events to any man, and he should foretell them to the world, this prediction and its subsequent verification, will appear miraculous to those who know nothing of the natural cause producing the effects foretold; just as the prediction of an eclipse by an astronomer and its verification when the eclipse happens will be miraculous to those who never saw or heard of the like. 3. As spiritual beings have also a much more thorough knowledge of the human frame than we have, they may in like manner, with great probability, conjecture what any particular person or persons, with whose temper and disposition they are well acquainted, will do on certain occasions; and hence may be able, with some degree of certainty, to foretell even future contingent events of this kind, which are near at hand, and their prediction may afterwards be verified by the events. that even men of ordinary sagacity, from a thorough knowledge of the subject, often arrive at a considerable degree of foreknowledge of this description. It is by these two kinds of foreknowledge, that soothsayers, false prophets, and those who had familiar spirits, mentioned in the scriptures, were able sometimes to foretell things which did actually come to pass; and in the same manner also may be explained such of the predictions of the heathen oracles, as were afterwards verified by the event. St. Augustin, speaking on the divination of evil spirits, accounts for it in the same manner as I have done: "First," says he, "we must know, that, for the most part, they foretell only such things as they themselves are going to do; for they often receive power to cause diseases, and

by vitiating the air to render it morbific; sometimes also they foretell not those things which they do themselves, but which, from natural signs, they foresee are to happen; which signs cannot fall under the knowledge of man."*

XI. Another way by which spiritual beings may appear to do things miraculous in our eyes, is by what is called fascination or bewitching, which may be conceived possible to different ways either her making such improved.

ble to different ways, either by making such impressions upon the organs of our senses, as if the real material object that naturally could make them was present and acting upon them, or by taking upon themselves the outward appearances of the things they want to represent. That spiritual beings, both good and bad, have a very great power in acting upon our internal senses, by altering and moving the humors of our bodies, so as by this means to raise many ideas in our imagination, and affections in our appetite, will not be called in question by any who profess the Christian religion. With regard to wicked spirits, all those texts of scripture which we have seen above concerning internal temptations, manifestly show this. And, indeed, how else could we account for those violent temptations of blasphemy, despair, scruples, involuntary doubts against faith, and the like, which are often borne in upon the mind with the utmost fury, to the unspeakable torment of the sufferer and in spite of all his most earnest endeavours and efforts to expel them; how, I say, could this be accounted for, but from the action of those wicked spirits violently disturbing the imagination! And, with regard to good angels, the Christian religion assures us, that they inspire us with good thoughts, calmour fears, assuage our passions, and that they also represent things to our imagination in our sleep, so as to discover to the servants of God, by that means, what things the divine pleasure

^{*}Primum sciendum est, quoniam de divinatione dæmonum questio est, illos ea plerumque prenuntiare quæ ipsi facturi sunt; Accipiunt enim sæpe potestatem et morbos immittere, et ipsum aerem vitiando morbidum reddere; aliquando autem non quæ ipsi faciunt, sed quæ, naturalibus signis, futura prænoscunt; quæ signa in hominum sensus venire non possunt.—Aug. de Divin. Dæmen. C. V.

requires from them: Thus the angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to fly into Egypt from the fury of Herod; and Almighty God himself, speaking to his people on this subject, says: "Behold I send an angel before thee—beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions-if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to thine enemies."* Now, if spiritual beings have so great power to act upon our internal senses, there cannot be any doubt that they can do the same upon our external organs In the holy scriptures we have numerous examples of angels appearing to men and conversing with them. These apparitions are commonly explained, by saying, that these spiritual beings took to themselves a body composed of air, or of some other matter, by which the same natural impressions were made upon the senses of the beholders as by the natural body of a man. But this opinion is subject to several difficulties; for, 1. There is not the least necessity for the supposition. If these spiritual beings can make such strong impressions as they sometimes do upon our internal senses, without the help of aerial bodies, how can it be imagined they should stand in need of such help to make what impressions they please upon our external senses also? If an angel could deprive the fire of all its power to hurt the three holy children that were thrown into the furnace, without taking any material body to assist him; why could he not with equal ease communicate any motion he pleased to the air, so as to excite the sound of words in the ears of those present or reflect the rays of light to their eyes so as to excite in their minds the idea of any colour or figure he might think proper? If the angels can act upon bodies at all, why not upon the air and light as well as any other body, without the necessity of assuming any kind of material body to assist them? Nay, if an angel could make to himself a body composed of air or

^{*} Exod. xxiii

any other matter, in order thereby to move the air or light, so as to affect the senses of those present, why could he not as well directly move the air or light itself, without the intervention of any material instrument whatsoever? 2. Several of the examples of these apparitions related in scripture are of such a nature, as plainly shows that the impressions were made by the spiritual agent upon the senses of those present immediately without the intervention of any material body at all. Had such a material body been taken by the angels who appeared to men, this must have reflected the light, and moved the air equally on all sides as other bodies do, and consequently all present must have been equally sensible of the angel's presence, and heard his words; but we find that frequently this was not the case: the angel that appeared to Balaam was seen by the ass for some time before he appeared to the master; the angel that appeared to Daniel by the great river was seen by him alone; and, says Daniel, "I alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them."* And at the conversion of St. Paul, though our Saviour spoke to him in an audible manner, and conversed with him, yet he himself tells us, that "they that were with him saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to him." † In which examples it is evident, that these apparitions were exhibited by an impression made upon the organs of some particular persons, and not of others, though equally present, which could not have been the case, without another miracle, had they been performed by means of any aerial body assumed by the agents for this purpose; and therefore, it is most reasonable to conclude they were immediate impressions made by those who appeared upon the organs of those who saw them. This is further confirmed; 3. From the way the scriptures mention the appearance of any spiritual being to those who, though present, saw him not before;

for the phrase used on these occasions plainly implies an impression made immediately on the organs of those to whom the apparition is exhibited. Thus, the angel had appeared for some time to Balaam's ass, before he had been seen by himself; at last, "The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel."* So also when Elisha's servant expressed great fear on seeing the army of the Syrians, his master, to comfort him, said "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them; and Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see; and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." † Shall we say here, that all these angels took material bodies in an instant to appear to the young man, and not rather that the impression was immediately made on his eyes without any material means being used? This is surely the most natural meaning of the expression here used, "The Lord opened his eyes." On these grounds, then, it seems most reasonable to conclude, that spiritual beings can, of themselves, make immediate impressions upon our outward senses, so as to excite the same ideas in our minds that bodily objects, if present, would do; they can also, as we have seen, by their action on our internal senses, excite very strong ideas in our imagination of things that have no real existence but in our fancies. When this is done by evil spirits for their wicked ends, it is called fascination; when by good angels, to communicate the will of God to his servants, it is a kind of revelation. At the same time it is not to be doubted, that these spiritual agents may occasionally make use of bodily instruments in such operations; as was probably the case with the angel that attended the people of God in the appearance of a pillar of fire and of a cloud, which was visibly seen by the people. By their strength and agility, they can doubtless present and take away any bodily object almost instantaneously, so as to be imperceptible to those present, and by all these different operations they can perform things far above the abilities of natural agents. And it is thus that several of the holy fathers and other learned men account for what the magicians of Egypt did by their enchantments.

XII. In these different ways, we find spiritual being can act upon matter and exhibit various effects, real or apparent, to our eyes; to what extent they can carry such operations we cannot tell; but our ignorance in this can be of no prejudice to us; because we are certain, as we shall afterwards see when explaining the criterion, that God Almighty will never allow wicked spirits to use this power, so as invincibly to deceive us; and what good angels do of this kind, is done only by authority from God, for our benefit and advantage.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

I. To call in question the possibility of miracles must appear absurd in the eyes of a serious Christian, and according to right reason, even to any one who believes the existence of the Deity, and acknowledges the universe to be the work of his almighty power. But, however absurd this may be, we know that, in this enlightened age, it is actually done; nay, not only is the possibility of miracles called in question, but it is plainly denied by the incredulous in these our days; who, whilst they glory in the many discoveries made in the works of nature, and boast of the improvement of their reason, and the superior light of their understanding, do by such denial, give proof of their ignorance, and show that their boasted light is mere darkness, and that the pretended improvement of their reason serves only to make them

more "learned fools." This charge might seem a little too severe, and would justly be exposed to the ridicule of the accused, should I pretend to support it only by the authority of revelation, which they deny. But this I do not intend to do, nor is there any need here of revela-The possibility of miracles is so natural a consequence of the definition we have given of them, that one must be determined to lay aside the use of reason, and act in direct opposition to its clearest light, who pretends to deny it. Their case, however, is so far to be pitied, as it is necessity that drives them to this extreme; for the authority of miracles carries along with it a most irrefragable argument against their tenets. It is impossible to escape the weight of this authority, if miracles be allowed an existence, and to deny their possibility is the easiest and most expeditious method of freeing themselves at once of this embargo. But it is one thing to deny, and another to prove; they do, indeed, offer something by way of proof for their denial, but a little attention to the merits of the cause will clearly show, that nothing is more unreasonable than what they allege on this subject.

II. We have seen above,* that miracles, considered as to the facts themselves, are of two sorts; first, such as consist in a suspension of these effects of some of the known laws of nature; and, secondly, such as are not contrary to any of these laws, but are out of the ordinary course of nature, and require a power to perform them superior to any natural agent. Of the first kind are the following; if a stone should fly upwards of itself; if the waters of a great river should be divided, those below running down and those above standing still, or gathering up in a heap, without any visible cause supporting them; if the sun should stop in his course; if a man should walk on the water, and the like: all which are contrary to the established known laws of nature, and umply a suspension of their usual effects. Miracles of

he second kind would be, if a man should cure disease an an instant by only willing it, by command, or by a simple touch; if a person should know and foretell contingent future events; if a man should be raised from the dead, and such like. These two kinds of facts must be considered separately, in order to show in the most distinct and convincing manner that miracles are possible.

III With regard to the first kind, such as consist in a suspension of any of the laws of nature, it is evident, that if miracles of this class be impossible, this impossibility must necessarily arise from one or other of these three causes: either that these laws are in themselves absolutely immutable and unsuspendible, (if I may be allowed the expression) so that their effects cannot be superseded by any power whatever; or that there is not in existence any agent whose abilities are capable of suspending them; or that it would argue inconstancy and mutability in the divine Author of those laws if, having once fixed them as the rules by which the universe should be regulated, he should, at any time, either suspend their effects himself, or allow them to be suspended by others. But it will easily be made appear that none of these can be said, and therefore we justly conclude that miracles of this kind are not impossible.

That the laws of nature are not immutable in them selves is evident from experience; many of those with which we are acquainted, not only may be, but actually often are, suspended, and hindered from producing their effects by other stronger laws acting against them; nay, effects diametrically opposite to them are often produced by this means. Hence we may justly argue, that those laws of nature which fall not under our experience though we know no natural or even created cause capable of suspending their effects, yet are not in themselves unsuspendible, but would undoubtedly be suspended, if any agent, with sufficient abilities, were to act against them. We see no impossibility in this conclusion—no ceason why some laws should be immutable in producing

their effects, and others not; and if analogy be allowed to have any weight, we must acknowledge that this conclusion is just and reasonable; therefore the laws of nature are not in themselves incapable of being suspended, and consequently upon this score miracles are not

impossible.

IV. We find from experience that man, by his own natural strength and abilities—and much more if aided by art, and making use of the powers which he finds in other creatures,—can produce many effects quite contrary to some of the known laws of nature,—can suspend these laws in many cases, and hinder the effects which they would naturally produce. From this we rationally argue, that beings of a superior nature, who are endued with much greater strength than man, and possess abilities far superior to his, and who, at the same time, are much better acquainted than man is, with all the powers of other creatures, must of course be able to suspend many more of the laws of nature, stop their ordinary effects, and produce others quite contrary to them, which man could never do, nor find any natural cause capable of performing. Let us suppose, for example, the strength of a man to be as one, with which he could raise a weight of ten stone. If we suppose an angel to have a degree of strength as ten thousand, he will of course be able to raise a weight of one hundred thousand stone. Let us now suppose again that this angel, invisible to us, should, by compact with any man. immediately at his desire raise up into the air a body weighing a hundred thousand stone, this would be an evident miracle to all that beheld it. Now, can the possibility of such a miracle be denied, either on account of the thing done, or the agent that is supposed to do it? Not on account of the thing done, which is not impossible in itself, if there be any agent endued with strength sufficient for performing it. Shall we then deny that an angel endued with such strength can exist? But where is the impossibility of this? Upon what grounds shall we denv it? And even if this should not be allowed, it

will not surely be denied, that God himself has strength sufficient for producing the effect supposed; and if it should be done by God instead of an angel, the possibility of it cannot be called in question for want of an agent capable of performing it, though the thing done be evidently in direct opposition to all the laws of gravity. Wherefore, as the same reasoning will equally hold in every possible case, we may justly conclude in general that whatever laws of nature there may be superior to the powers of beings of an inferior order, there are supernatural agents of a higher order capable of suspending them; and if there be any of those laws superior to the powers of all created agents, they can never be above the almighty power of God; consequently there can never be wanted an agent, either among creatures or in the Creator himself, capable of suspending any of the laws of nature whatsoever, since these laws are in themselves suspendible; and therefore miracles of this class are not impossible for want of proper agents capable of suspending them.

V. The last refuge to which infidelity can resort is to say, that it would argue inconstancy and mutability in God, the divine Author of all the laws of nature, either to suspend their effects in any particular instance himself, or to allow any other so to suspend them. But here again I must appeal to experience; by which it is certain, that several of the laws of nature with which we are acquainted, yea, even those of gravity and attraction which surely are among the more general laws of nature,—so far as we know,—are in many cases suspended from producing their proper effects, by other created powers acting in opposition to them, yet without any prejudice to the immutability of God. If therefore, some of the laws of nature may be suspended, and yet God remain immutable, why not others? why not all, when an adequate power is exerted against them? Does it argue mutability in God, that an angel, for example, should stop the course of waters, running in a river (supposing him capable by his own natural strength to

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do so,) contrary to the known laws of gravity; whilst vet it argues no such mutability, that man, by his natural strength, or by the help of gun-powder, should make a ball of iron fly upwards from the earth with a most amazing velocity, which is diametrically opposite to these same laws? And if neither of these cases can prejudice the immutability of God, why should it be thought to do so, if he himself should be pleased to stop for a time the diurnal motion of the earth, and thereby lengthen the day, and make the sun in appearance stand still in the heavens? Does it argue mutability in God, to suspend any of those laws by the sole act of his will, whilst it argues no such mutability when he does it by using other secondary causes for that purpose? If this were the case, a very absurd consequence would follow; namely, that God could perform any miraculous effect he pleases, in suspending the laws of nature by the ministry of angels, giving them strength for this purpose, but could do no such thing himself without destroying his own mutability, and becoming changeable. Let us therefore conclude, that, as we see those laws of nature that fall under our experience often suspended by other natural causes acting against them, without any prejudice to the immutability of God, so it never can hurt that divine prerogative, when he himself, by the sole act of his will, shall be pleased to suspend any of these laws, without making use of any created secondary causes; and consequently, that such miracles as consist in a suspension of any of the laws of nature are possible, without the least prejudice to the immutability of the Deity. In a word, we may observe here, in general, that the whole order of the creation, and all those laws by which this order is maintained, are the effects of the free will and good pleasure of Almighty God. He made choice of the present system of nature, not by force, nor from necessity, but according to his own good pleasure; nei ther did he make this choice at random, or by caprice, but with a view to those wise moral ends which he proposed to himself by doing so; Consequently, as he freely made_

all things in nature such as they are, he can with equal ease change them as he pleses; as he freely enacted those laws by which all nature is governed for the best of ends, so he can dispense with any of them when he sees proper; that is, when the end proposed can better be accomplished by such dispensation. And though this good end happens in time, yet both it, and the dispensing with any law of nature, in order to procure it, were always present with God from all eternity; and therefore, when actually accomplished in time, it can argue no change in him at all. He forms no new decrees, he makes no new laws, he acquires no new knowledge which he had not before; what he wills in time he willed from all eternity; and, as St. Augustin justly observes, opera mutat, concilia non mutat; "he changes his works, but his counsels and views remain always the same." This the holy scripture beautifully expresses in the book of Wisdom: "Nothing is hidden from his eyes; he sees from eternity to eternity, and nothing is wonderful to him." * Consequently nothing is new, nothing can cause or suppose any change in him.

Seeing, therefore, that the laws of nature are not incapable in themselves of being suspended, provided an adequate force acts upon them; that there is to be found, either in created agents or in God, power and strength fully capable of suspending all these laws, and that they may be suspended by any of these causes without the smallest prejudice to the divine immutability; it evidently follows, that miracles of this kind are not impossible.

VI. We come now to consider the possibility of those miracles which do not consist in the suspension of any law of nature, but are beside the ordinary course of nature. And here I should scarcely imagine a possibility of this kind could admit of the least difficulty with any thinking person. For, will any one be so bold as to deny, that the same almighty power, which at first created all things out of nothing, and gave to every creature

its being, powers and properties, is still able to perform numberless effects which far exceed all the powers and forces bestowed on these his creatures? Will any one dare to deny that Almighty God is able to do in a moment, by the sole act of his own will, what he does in a certain space of time by the ordinary powers of created agents? It is not contrary to any law of nature that disease in the human body should be cured, that plants should grow from their seed, and the like; these effects are daily produced by natural causes, but they require time to perfect them. Almighty God gave these natural causes the powers of producing these effects; and will any one deny that he himself can produce them in an instant by the sole act of his will without making use of these created powers? Or will it be said, that Almighty God,-in giving such powers to creatures, has divested himself of the power of acting without their aid? Or has he bound himself by an immutable law never to produce the above effects without them? Barely to propose these things, is sufficient to shew the absur dity; and it is evident, at first sight, that all such mirac ulous effects are as plainly above the power of all created agents, and yet are possible, nay easy, to Almighty God, whenever he pleases to perform them. Now, miracles of this second class are the most excellent of all others, and the most proper for obtaining all the ends intended to be gained by miracles, as they are the most incontestible proofs of the finger of God. It is to be observed moreover, that the argument of Freethinkers, drawn from the immutability of God, against the possibility of miracles, should he change or suspend any of the laws of nature, though of no manner of weight, even against miracles of the first class which imply such suspension, yet has no place here at all, where these laws are neither changed nor suspended, but a new effect produced by the almighty hand of God, out of the ordinary course of these laws, and superior to the strength of all creatures.

VII. Another argument made use or against the poss

bility on miracles, is drawn from the wisdom of God, as if it would argue a defect of wisdom in the Deity, if the laws established by him for the regulation of the universe were insufficient for this purpose, and should require at any time to be suspended, in order to obtain the ends he had in view. What I have said above concerning the immutability of God is equally applicable to his wisdom, and equally shows the weakness of this argument drawn from it against the possibility of miracles. Besides we may further add, that, as Mr. Farmer justly observes, "whoever reflects on the boundless extent and duration of the divine government, will easily perceive, that nothing can be more absurd, as well as arrogant, than for man, a creature whose faculties are so limited, and who is but of yesterday, to presume to determine, that no fit occasion for extraordinary interpositions can ever occur in that administration, the plan of which transcends his comprehension. By what principles of reason can it be demonstrated, that he who reigns from eternity to eternity never formed any designs, except such as may be accomplished by the present establishment and structure of the universe !" Now, if Almighty God has from all eternity formed different designs to be executed among his creatures at different periods, the exhibition of miracles at these periods, in order to the more perfect execution of these designs, so far from being an arraignment of his wisdom, gives us in fact the most manifest and the most endearing display of it. Besides, had the universe been composed only of agents without any liberty or free will in their actions, extraordinary interpositions of the Deity by miracles would have been less required, if at all; but as the rational creatures, whom Almighty God governs by moral laws, are endowed with free will and liberty to obey or not obey his commands, and as experience too surely shows how apt they are to neglect their duty and transgress his orders, nay even to forget what they owe him, notwithstanding the numberless proofs of his provicence and perfections displayed in the regular course of the universe, which, by use and custom, lose their power

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to move our hearts; nothing can more display the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator, than that he should at certain times give extraordinary proofs of his power, by controlling the usual course of nature, thereby to awaken intelligent beings from their lethargy, to excite in their hearts a sense of their duty and dependance, and to give them a deep impression of the power and presence of their sovereign Master. "It would be difficult to prove (says Mr. Farmer) that God may not in certain circumstances, have greater reasons for varying from his stated rules of acting than for adhering to them: and whenever this is the case, and the end proposed is proportionable to the means for accomplishing it, the miracles are worthy of a divine interposition. Nor does this imply any inconsistency in the divine conduct, or any defect or disturbance of the laws of nature.— When the Deity occasionally controls or supersedes them he does not hereby contradict or defeat his intention in their first establishment; he proposes a design different from it, but not inconsistent with it. The laws of nature being the laws of God are certainly perfect; that is, perfectly adapted to answer all the uses for which they are designed; but miracles derogate not from this perfection; because they aim at an end which the laws of nature were not intended to answer." To this just remark we must add, that both the ends proposed, and the miracles wrought to obtain them were from all eternity known and present to the wisdom of God, and comprehended in the general plan of his operations, to be put in execution at the time appointed by him. Thi again shows that miracles, instead of derogating from this wisdom, still further display its immensity, which comprehends all things, foresees all things, and so wonderfully adapts the means to the ends and designs it proposes. I shall conclude this subject by inserting another passage from Mr. Farmer, wherein he very judiciously sets forth the possibility of miracles with regard to the power of God. "Infinite power," says he, "though it does not extend to contradictions, performs with ease

whatever is possible in its nature. And so far are miraculous works from being impossible, that they are similar to what we see actually effected in the common course of divine providence. I will endeavour to illustrate this by the following example: To cause water to be both water and wine at the same time, is a manifest absurdity and contradiction, and therefore cannot be the object of any power; but to turn water into wine, or to change one liquid into another specifically different, is certainly within the reach of divine omnipotence, inasmuch as there is nothing contradictory in the idea of such transformation, and we observe continual changes of a like kind in many parts of the creation. Thus the moisture of the earth, by a common, but admirable operation in the natural world, is converted into the juice of the grape, and numberless other juices differing in kind from each other, according to the different nature of the plant or tree which imbibes it. This observation might be extended farther, and applied to other instances. Revelation itself is a miracle; but wherefore should it be thought impossible with God? To his inspiration we owe our understandings, with all their powers; from him we derive the noble faculty of speech, by which we communicate our ideas to each other—and has the Father of our spirits no access to them, no ability of imparting immediately and directly the knowledge of his will, and of affording sufficient evidence of his own extraordinary presence and operation? Is there any thing in this more inexplicable than in the common action of mind on body, and body on mind? Will any one assert, that the Amighty Author of our frame is unable to repair the disorders of it? that he who with such exquisite skill formed the seeing eye and hearing ear, cannot restore sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf? or that it is impossible for him to raise the dead, who every year renews the face of nature, and revives the seed sown in the earth, and every day awakens mankind from the death of sleep to new life, in a manner as incomprehensible by us as the greatest miracle? He gave being to

every hving thing; to innumerable kinds of animals, and to a great diversity of rational creatures; continually does he call into existence ten thousand new individuals; and is the second gift of life more difficult than the first? The analogy between miracles and the common operations of God in the settled course of nature, is a convincing demonstration of the possibility of the former." This passage is a specimen of the excellent abilities o. Mr. Farmer in solid reasoning, where he employs them in a good cause, and makes it a pity that, in his Dissertation upon Miracles, he has employed his parts in advancing several things, and putting such explanations on the sacred scriptures as will not stand the test of sound theology.

CHAPTER IV.

On the ends for which Miracles may be wrought, as discovered by Reason.

I. Though it would be a vain attempt to pretend to investigate all the various ends and particular designs which the divine wisdom has ever had, or may have, in performing miracles; for, "Who has known the sense of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor?"* yet it is of the utmost consequence to inquire what can be known for certain on this head; not only because the enemies of Christianity reject the belief of miracles, for this reason that they forsooth can see no good end to be attained by them, or at least such a one as they, in their wisdom, judge worthy of God, (which pretence shall be examined in its proper place,) but also because I find some good people who glory in the character of being faithful Christians, and are otherwise men of good sense and learning, yet seem to think this argument sufficient

to disprove the continuation and existence of miracles in these later ages of the church, and allege, that as the gospel is now sufficiently confirmed and widely propagated, there seems to be no necessity that God should any more interpose by miracles, and thence conclude that in fact he does not. This way of arguing assumes for granted that the propagation and confirmation of the gospel is the only end worthy of God for which to interpose by miracles; but though this were true, the conclusion drawn from it would not follow, seeing that the planting the gospel among those heathen nations who have not yet received it, must even according to this principle, require the assistance of miracles, as well as the first propagation of it in those other nations who have long since embraced it. The difficulties to be overcome in this great work are as great among the heathen nations of the present day as they were at the beginning of Christianity, and the bulk of the people now are as incapable of understanding the rational arguments and proofs by which the Christian religion is confirmed, as our predecessors were at their first conversion; nor can it well be thought that the heathen world at present would give either the time or application necessary for examining these proofs, even though they all had sufficient capacity for doing it. But miracles are a language suited to the meanest capacity; they require no time or application of study to comprehend them; they conquer at once, they convince at sight, and are the most certain as well as the most expeditious means of gaining the only ends intended by them, and of conquering all the obstinacy of the heart of man; and therefore, even though it were true that the propagation of the gospel was the only end worthy of God for which to interpose by miracles yet we might still reasonably expect from a God of infinite goodness, that he would continue from time to time to perform them, at least for the propagation of his gospel among those heathen nations who as yet do not know him. But if we examine this matter attentively, we shall clearly see, that the propagation of the gospel,-

though doubtless a very principal end of miracles,—in yet by no means the only one; and that there are other ends besides this, which not only the light of reason shows to be worthy of God's interposing by miracle in order to obtain them, but which have been actually judged worthy of such interposition by God himself. What these are, at least as to the general heads which seem to comprehend most of the particular cases, I shall endea vour now to show, first, by the light of reason founded on such principles as, I dare say, every man of common sense will readily admit and then by the light which the holy scriptures give us concerning it. To begin then with reason, the principles I lay down are these:

II. First, It is evident from the very nature and idea of miracles, as above explained, that no operation whatever, no possible effect produced or producible in the creation, can be miraculous with relation to God, or wonderful in his sight; both because he thoroughly knows all that possibly can be known concerning every possible effect or operation in his creatures, and also because he possesses in himself a power not only adequate, but infinitely superior to every possible effect whatever producible in them; so that nothing is either hard or difficult for him to perform. With the same ease by which he keeps up the present order in the universe, he can in a moment alter, or even destroy it; with the same ease with which he created all things in the begin ning out of nothing, he can, if he pleases, reduce them to nothing again; and, consequently, with respect to the almighty power of God, the most miraculous operation that can be done in the creation is as easy as the smallest, and infinitely more so to him than the throwing a stone upwards, contrary to the laws of gravity, is to man: for it is enough that he wills any thing to be done, and be it what it will, great or small, his all-powerful will is instantly obeyed.

Secondly, No change, alteration, or unusual effect produced in the material insensible part of the universe, merely as such, that is, when considered only in itself

without relation to any effect it may have upon sensitive or intelligent creatures, can, properly speaking, be called either good or evil. The idea we have of evil seems always to include a relation to sensitive or intelligent beings, and consists either in making them unhappy by sufferings, or in bringing upon them moral guilt and turpitude, which is disgraceful to their nature, and renders them odious in the eyes of their Creator. The evil of guilt and the evil of suffering are therefore the only thing we mean by the word evil, in the strict and proper acceptation of that word: Now these, it is plain, can have place only in sensitive and intelligent creatures, and not at all in the insensible and material part of the creation; the former being only capable of suffering or guilt, but not the latter. Whatever change, alteration or effect can be produced in material beings, may alter their forms, motions, configuration of their parts, or the like; but nothing of this enters into the idea of what we properly mean by evil, which therefore can only have place in the sensitive and intelligent creation.

Thirdly, As the very essence, I may say, of evil consists in making intelligent and sensitive creatures guilty or miserable; so good, being the contrary of evil, is properly speaking, whatever makes these creatures innocent, and virtuous, or happy; and the more any thing contributes to make them truly virtuous or truly happy, the greater and more excellent a good it is. Mr. Hutchison, in his excellent treatise of moral philosophy, speaking upon this subject, very justly observes, That our moral sense or conscience is implanted in us by the Author of our being as the proper judge of what is good and evil; and that the several objects which this Judge approves as good, are only such as have these two qualities, A tendency to the happiness of others, and, A tendency to the moral perfection of the mind possessing them: consequently that the objects which this Judge condemns as evil, are such as have the contrary tenden-From all this we again justly infer, that no change or effects produced in the inanimate creation, which is incapable of moral perfection or of happiness, can, properly speaking, be called either good or evil, and that these two can have place only in the sensitive or intelli-

gent creatures.

Fourthly, The idea we have of God, as a Being infinitely perfect, convinces us that he must essentially desire and approve the moral excellency and virtuous perfection of his creatures; and that the procuring of this is an object worthy of his divine goodness and sanctity: and, on the contrary, that he must abhor and detest moral turpitude in his creatures, and that it is highly becoming his divine goodness and sanctity to prohibit and hinder the same. In fact, what is this moral sense or conscience implanted in us by the Creator, but the promulgation of his law in our hearts, the manifestation of his will, declaring, in the most feeling manner, what he requires from us, the most intimate and convincing proof that he wills our moral excellency and perfection, and severely prohibits our moral turpitude? The whole exterior manifestation of his will to man by revelation, both in the old and new law, proves this truth, as the constant tendency of revelation is to exhort, persuade, encourage, and assist us to advance and improve our souls in virtue and perfection, and to prohibit and deter us from the contrary.

Fifthly, The idea we have of God as a being of infinite goodness, convinces us that he can never directly will the misery of his creatures for itself; he cannot possibly have pleasure in our sufferings merely as such; he must essentially desire and will the happiness of his creatures as an object most becoming the supreme mind, and most worthy his infinite goodness: and if, at any time, he inflicts sufferings upon his creatures, and renders them for a while unhappy, we cannot conceive that he rests in this as an ultimate object of his complacency, but must be moved to do so, in order to obtain some other end more congenial to his infinite perfections. The light of reason points out two such ends, viz. either procuring in his goodness the moral perfection of his creatures.

which is their greatest good; or punishing them in jus tice for their having voluntarily, and therefore culpably, brought upon themselves the guilt of moral turpitude Revelation confirms this also in the strongest manner; for, throughout the whole series of the sacred scriptures, we find Almighty God every where represented to us as having the most tender love and concern for his creatures, as earnestly desiring their happiness, and as doing every thing on his part, without infringing the freedom of their wills, to procure it. It is true, these same sacred writings do sometimes also represent him in the most awful colours, as inflicting or threatening the most dreadful miseries upon his creatures; but then we are at the same time assured that he does so against his inclination, as forced to it by their crimes, and that even in doing it his chief design is for their greater good, namely, to reclaim them from their evil ways, and to secure their eternal happiness. Hence, then, to procure the good of his creatures, both by rendering them happy, and by promoting their moral excellency and perfection, is an object worthy of God, which the very idea we have of him, as well as his own express declaration in holy writ, convinces us that he really desires, and most powerfully endeavours to promote.

But, Sixthly, The case is very different with regard to the material insensible creation. We have seen above, that the present order established in the universe, and the laws of nature by which that order is kept up, are not essentially necessary in themselves, but dependentirely on the free choice of Almighty God. It is true, Almighty God did not make this choice at random nor by caprice, but with the most consummate wisdom according to the wise ends he had in view; neither can we suppose that he will capriciously alter the laws and order ne has once established; but then, as they are not self necessary, but depend entirely upon his will, it cannot be denied that he can alter, change, or even annihilate them, if, and when he pleases. Again, the material world, as far as our reason can see, is in itself perfectly

indifferent whether it be in its present form, or in any other form whatever, or be guided by its present laws or any other; nor can we have the smallest notion of good or evil accruing to material or insensible creatures, whatever change or alteration we may imagine to happen in their present forms, or in those laws of nature by which they are at present guided. Whether a particle of matter be emplo, ed to compose the sun or a dunghill, whether it shines in the form of gold, or is trampled under foot in the form of mud, it is neither more or less happy, nor more or less virtuous, in the one case than in the other; because, in fact, it is incapable either of happiness or misery, vice or virtue. Lastly, Neither can we possibly imagine that any change in matter, or its laws, should, in the smallest degree, affect the happiness of God, to whom, -considering it only with regard to his own happiness, and independently of any particular design he may have in view,—it must be perfectly indifferent whether the material world be of this form, or of that, be guided by its present laws, or by any other, or indeed, whether it has any existence at all or not. From all which it seems evidently to follow, that the whole material creation, with its present order and laws, are not in themselves the immediate and ultimate objects of the divine will, intended by God in establishing them; they are only the means for procuring those ends which divine wisdom had in view; they are, therefore, neither good nor evil in themselves, but only in so far as they conduce to promote or hinder those ends for which they were created.

III. From all these evident principles, then, the following reasoning naturally flows. As the conserving or suspending of the laws of nature is neither good nor evil itself, but only in so far as it conduces to, or hinders some good end; as the possibility both of the one and of the other is perfectly the same with regard to Almighty God, who with equal ease can either preserve, suspend, or even destroy these laws entirely: On the other hand, as the procuring the happiness or moral per-

· fection of intelligent creatures, which is procuring a real good, and hindering their misery or mortal turpitude, which is hindering a real evil, are objects truly worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness and which he actually wills and desires, therefore the suspending of the laws of nature, in order to procure these ends, is truly worthy the divine wisdom and goodness. And if it be thus worthy of Almighty God, even to suspend those general laws which he has made in the creation, in order to obtain those ends, it is no less so to exert his almighty power in producing other effects in the material world superior to the powers of all created agents. when the procuring the said ends makes it necessary or proper to do so; that is, in other words, that the procuring the happiness or moral perfection of intelligent creatures, and the hindering their misery and moral turpitude, are ends truly worthy the divine interposition, even by MIRACLE.

IV. But to place this matter in a still more striking point of view, let us consider what those ends are which the divine wisdom had in view in creating this universe, and in establishing its present laws and order; for, if at any time it should happen that a suspension of these laws, or an alteration of the present order, might be requisite in order to attain these ends more easily or more effectually it would then be not only becoming and wor thy the divine goodness and wisdom so to suspend the laws, or alter the present order of things, but it would -even be in some degree incumbent upon him to do so; and if in this inquiry we find that the procuring of the happiness and perfection of intelligent creatures was certainly one of the principal, if not the ultimate end of the creation, the above conclusion will appear with a double lustre, and shine forth with the most incontes-

table evidence.

V. Now, whether we examine this matter by the light of reason only, or by taking a view of those beneficent purposes which manifestly appear throughout the whole creation, or from the light that revelation gives us con-

cerning it, we shall evidently see that this is actually the case; namely, that the procuring of the happiness of intelligent creatures is one of the principal, if not the ultimate end of the creation. For, first, let us suppose there were no rational or intelligent creatures upon earth,nothing but inanimate matter and the brute creation,what idea can we form of such a work from the hand of an all-wise and an all-powerful Being? Can we see it in any degree becoming such a Being to create such a world? What satisfaction can we imagine it could give him, to see inanimate matter formed and moulded as it is and a crowd of irrational creatures, without judgment or reflection, wandering up and down upon the face of the earth? Could the actual existence of such a world make the smallest difference to him in point of happiness, from the lively idea he must have of it, and of all possible worlds, in his own mind? For my own part, I cannot comprehend how it should: and to me it would seem altogether unbecoming a Being of infinite perfection to create such a world as this would be. But let rational and intelligent creatures be placed in this world. the case is immediately changed. These are capable of knowing the God who made them, of understanding the wise and beneficent purposes which shine forth in his works, of rising up from thence to a sense of his amiable perfections, of admiring, loving, serving, praising, and adoring their great Creator, and of enjoying, a sublime happiness,—a divine kind of pleasure in this exercise of their intellectual faculties. The feelings of our own heart immediately assure us, that to receive such voluntary and reasonable service from intelligent and free creatures must be agreeable to the Creator, and consequently proper to procure for himself; and also that to make such creatures happy, and to provide for them all means necessary for being so, is no less worthy the infinite goodness of this sovereign mind, must afford a new joy and pleasure to himself, and therefore is an object becoming him to procure. From all which we justly conclude. "That the rational and intelligent

creatures are by far the chief and most excellent part of the creation; that without them all the rest would be to little or no purpose; that they are the principal object of the care and attention of the Creator; that all inferior beings are made only to be, either mediately or immediately, subservient to their happiness and perfection; and consequently that the happiness and perfection of intelligent creatures is one of the greatest, if not the ultimate end of the creation."

VI. If now, in the second place, we open our eyes, and take a view of the works of God in that portion of them which falls under our examination, how strongly will this lead us to the same conclusion? For what do we find in all the creatures around us but the most manifest and convincing proofs, that the grand design of Almighty God in creating them was, that they might all concur and co-operate to the happiness and moral excellence of man? And with what admirable design, with what consummate wisdom are they formed to contribute to our happiness by supplying all our wants, relieving our necessities, and contributing to our pleasure, contentment and ease!—and that in the most sensible manner, and not sparingly, but with superabundance: to our moral excellence and perfection, by displaying to our understanding, in the most amiable colours, the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of their Creator, and by engaging our hearts, from the most powerful motives of duty and gratitude, to love, serve, praise and adore the kind, the beneficent Author of all our happiness It is true, indeed, the malice of the heart of man too often alas! perverts creatures from those great ends for which they were designed by prostituting them, in the most ungrateful manner, to the very opposite and worst of purposes. But this does not, in the smallest degree, alter our view of the original design of Almighty God in creating them; that still shines forth in the midst of all the bad use to which the wickedness of man perverts them, and the rational and impartial enquirer must still confess, "That the happiness and moral excellence of

man is one of the greatest, if not the ultimate end for

which they have their being."

VII. I say, "if not the ultimate end," because reason alone, unassisted by revelation, though it clearly discerns that the happiness and perfection of man must be one of the chief ends for which the material world was created; yet not being able to penetrate farther with certainty, our reason finds many difficulties in concluding it to be the ultimate or only end. These difficulties arise from that deluge of moral turpitude which overspreads the face of the earth, and those numberless miseries to which human nature is daily exposed; and the solution of these difficulties can only be had from revelation. If, therefore, in the third place, we examine the light which revelation gives us in this matter, we shall find that it removes all the difficulties of natural reason. confirms the conclusion which reason makes, and by going a step further, improves her light, and sets the point in question in the clearest view. What we find then revealed to us by Almighty God himself concerning his design in creating the universe is as follows: First That the first, the principal, the ultimate end which he had in view in giving existence to creatures was for his own pleasure, for his own honour and glory; to display the magnificence of his divine perfections and excellencies to beings capable of knowing them, and to receive from them that homage of servitude and praise, which their essential dependance on him, and his divine perfections most justly demand from them. Thus we are expressly taught in holy writ, that "The Lord made all things for himself." * Again, Secondly, That his primary and chief design was to procure this grand, this ultimate end of the creation, his own glory, by the moral excellence and happiness of his rational creatures and their voluntary service; for this purpose he endows them with free will, instructs them both by the light of reason implanted within their breasts, and also by the

external revelation of his will to them wherein this their perfection consists; gives them every kind of help neces sary for acquiring it; engages them to apply themselves earnestly to the pursuit of it, by the most sacred promises of eternal and perfect happiness; deters them from the contrary conduct by threatening them with the most dreadful of all conceivable miseries; declares to them, in the most amiable manner, his infinite goodness and love to them; assures them that he wills not their death or misery, but, on the contrary, that he most ardently desires their eternal life and happiness, and has given them the most unexceptionable proof of the sincerity of this desire in what he has done and suffered for them: That, however, having made them free agents, he will not force them, but leaves it to their own choice to comply or not as they please with this great end of their creation—the promoting of his honour and glory by means of their own perfection and happiness. But then, Thirdly, If they refuse to comply with what their Creator thus bounteously demands from them; if, by abusing their liberty, they refuse to promote his honour and glory by their own perfection and happiness, will his views be disappointed? will his intentions be frustrated? will he be deprived of that glory he proposed to himself by creating them? By no means; this is impossible. God created them for his own glory, which he absolutely wills to procure by his creatures; and to this grand, this ultimate end they must all co-operate whether they will or not. His primary intention and first desire is, that they should do so by means of their cwn perfection and happiness; but if, by the abuse of their free will, they refuse to comply with this, he then has recourse to a secondary intention, which is to inflict sufferings and misery upon them as the just punishment of their infidelity and ingratitude; and thus, whilst they refuse to glorify his goodness and mercy, he obliges them, whether they will or not, to exalt and set forth the glory of his justice. In other words the chief and principal design of the Almighty God, in the works of creation, is to

promote his own honour and glory by the moral perfection and happiness, both temporal and eternal, of his rational creatures; that for this purpose all other creatures have their existence, the principal view of the Creator in making them, being that they might co-operate and serve as instruments and means for promoting the harpiness and perfection of rational creatures here; and consequently their eternal salvation hereafter. But -however, if these his rational creatures, abusing the free will he has given them, refuse to comply with the firs and primary design of their great Creator, viz. the promotion of his glory by their own perfection and happiness; and if, instead of using the other inferior creatures as means to procure this end, they abuse them contrary to the design of Almighty God, against his will, and consequently to his displeasure; that then his secondary design in the works of the creation is still to procure his own honour and glory, not now by the perfection and happiness of his rational creatures, which they have refused to realize, but by their misery and destruction; obliging them, by this means, whether they will or not, to secure the exaltation and glory of his justice, since they had so ungratefully refused to promote that of his mercy, and making use of the other creatures, which were primarily intended for their happiness, as the just instruments of their punishment for the abuse they made of them.

VIII. It would carry us to too great a length to cite here the numberless testimonies of holy writ, wherein Almighty God has discovered to us these his views and ends in creating this universe; nor indeed, is it at all necessary, seeing the whole tenor and scope of revealed truths rest upon them. But, from considering what is here said, we see a clear and full solution of those difficulties, which reason alone could not penetrate in her researches into those matters. 'We see the cause of that deluge of vice and immorality which reigns so widely in the world, viz. the abuse of that liberty which God has bestowed upon us as free agents; and we see also

whence all those miseries flow, under which we daily groan, namely, not from any want of goodness in God. who takes no pleasure in our sufferings as such, but from the malice of our own hearts in abusing our liberty, which forces Almighty God, contrary to his primary intention, to inflict these sufferings upon us as the just punishment of our crimes. And from the same princi ples the main point we have here in view, flows as a natural and necessary consequence, viz. "That the rational and intelligent creatures are by far the chief and most excellent part of the creation; that without them all the rest are of little or no signification; that they are the principal object of the care and attention of the Creator; that all other inferior beings are made only to be, either mediately or immediately, subservient to their happiness and perfection, and have no use but for this purpose: Consequently, since all inferior creatures, and of course the whole present order and laws of nature, are only established as subservient to the above great ends, it is not only reasonable, but most highly becoming and worthy the infinite wisdom and goodness of God to suspend any of these laws, to alter the present order of things, or to perform any other miraculous effect he pleases, when ever the promotion of his own honour and glory, either by procuring the happiness and perfection of his rational creatures, or by averting their misery and moral turpitude, or even by inflicting just punishments upon them, may require his doing so. Nay, should the case happen wherein these ends could not so properly nor so perfectly be attained by other ordinary means, it would then be not only becoming Almighty God, but it would even be a some sort incumbent upon him to work a miracle in order to procure them."

IX. But it will, perhaps be here objected, why may not the divine wisdom procure these ends by natural and ordinary means, without having recourse to miracles? in answer to this we must observe, 1. That all I have affirmed in the former part of the above conclusion is, that the procuring of moral good and preventing of

moral evil are objects truly worthy of the goodness of God to effect, even by means of miracles. There is no doubt but he may procure them by natural means, if, and when he pleases; but as we have seen that they are in themselves so valuable as to be an immediate object of the givine will, and, on the contrary, that the preserving or suspending of the laws of nature is by no means a primary object of God's desire, nor contains either good or evil in itself, considered independently of any moral good end to be obtained by it; consequently, if the former good ends can be more easily or better obtained by a temporary suspension of these laws, or by any other supernatural operation performed by Almighty God for that purpose, it would be highly reasonable, and most becoming the divine wisdom so to suspend these laws, or perform that operation, in order thereby the more easily or better to procure them. And if a case at any time should occur in which these ends could not be obtained. by ordinary natural means, on this supposition it will pe in some sort incumbent on Almighty God, if he wills the ends, to perform the miracle in order to obtain them; which is the last part of the above conclusion. But, 2. It does not belong to us to judge what means are most proper for the divine wisdom and goodness actually to use, whether natural or miraculous, in order to procure these ends; they are both equally easy to-Him, and he is at perfect freedom to use which of them e pleases. The Christian religion assures us, that he uses sometimes the one and sometimes the other; sometimes procures the sanctity and perfection of his servants by ordinary and natural means and sometimes uses miraculous and supernatural means for this purpose, according as he in his wisdom judges most proper to be done. But, 3. It will not, I think be denied, that it is most becoming the divine goodness and wisdom to use those means for attaining his views which are most proper and conducive thereto. Now, it is undoubted that miraculous interpositions of the divine power are much more efficacious for procuring moral good, and

preventing moral evil, in intelligent creatures, than all the ordinary natural means by the agency of second causes can be. The reason is very plain; because, though all the objects about us present us with numberless proofs of the divine perfections, and excite us in the most powerful manner to love and serve their great Creator; yet these objects become familiar by custom, and the mind being habituated to them, ceases to attend to the great instructions they contain, and to take occasion for them to elevate her thoughts to their glorious Author, and to render him that worship and service which he so justly deserves from us, and which they so loudly call upon us to render unto him. But when a miracle is performed, it rouses our attention, and awakens us out of our lethargy; it makes the divine presence more sensible to us, and excites in our minds all those holy sentiments and affections of respect, fear, veneration, love, gratitude, and the like, which the wonderful things around us would also do, did they not by custom lose their force and efficacy for that purpose. It is a most incomprehensible effect of the divine power and goodness to multiply a few grains, when sown in the ground, to such an amazing quantity of corn as to afford food sufficient for thousands; but being used to see this every day, we think nothing of it, and seldom or ever take occasion from it to excite in our hearts suitable affections to the great Author of so stupendous a benefit. But were these natural and ordinary means to fail, as in time of famine, and should God then, by his almighty power, multiply a handful of meal in our granaries, so as amply to supply our wants till plenty should return to the land, what admirable effects would this excite in our hearts! what admiration! what thanks! what gratitude, love, and confidence! And why so? Not because this last is more difficult to Almighty God than the former, or a greater effort of his power; not because it is more wonderful in itself, but because it is unusual to us, because it is extraordinary, and because upon that account it more strikingly shows the hand of God, and makes us more sensible both of his divine presence and power, and of his infinite goodness towards us.

X. The learned authors of the Christian Magazine, in their dissertations entitled, The Truth of the Christian Religion Vindicated, p. 159. speak on this subject as follows: "Without doubt the general order of nature perfectly displays the greatness of the Supreme Being; but this order, thus perpetual and constant, shouts to the deafest ears, and speaks aloud to the most obdurate hearts. This is a continual miracle, and one that comprehends a multitude of miracles; but yet in vain does it seek to call back mortals to the knowledge of their Maker. We are accustomed to every object in nature; the great wonders of the world are fallen into a kind of disparagement and disregard, and no longer strike our attention, because they are ever present. It is the same God who every day works all those miracles wherewith nature is replete, and those which are less common and more remarkable. But because custom induces forgetfulness of the grandeur of the former; because mankind, diverted by many objects, no longer attend to ordinary events, or take occasion from them to elevate their minds to their almighty Dispenser, and to render him that worship which therefore is so justly his due; on these accounts, and in amazing condescension to our weakness, he hath graciously reserved certain extraordinary events, which he assiduously takes care from time to time to produce, with a view to arouse mankind from their lethargy of negligence. If these less usual miracles have a more striking effect upon us than others, it is not that they are more excellent than those of which we are daily spectators, but that, being less frequent, they render us more sensible of the presence of their Author,"

Seeing, therefore, that miracles are thus a much more powerful means to procure the moral perfection of intelligent beings than the ordinary means by secondary causes, it follows of course, that Almighty God not only may procure these good ends by such miraculous operations, but that it is most worthy of his divine goodness, and highly becoming his infinite power and wisdom from time to time to do so.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ENDS OF MIRACLES, AS DISCOVERED TO US BY REVELATION.

I. HAVING seen what those ends are which, by the light of reason, appear worthy of Almighty God to procure by miracles, we now proceed to examine what revelation points out to us on this subject. Several of the principles which we have made use of above, are not only evident to reason and common sense, but are also, as we have seen, conformable to, and established by revelation; which gives them a double lustre and efficacy. But it will put the conclusion we have drawn from these principles beyond all contradiction, if, upon a further inquiry, we shall find that it is the very same which revelation itself discovers to us in this matter. That this is really the case, I think, may easily be shown by an argument the most convincing of any, and fitted for the meanest capacity—I mean the consideration of facts related and attested by God himself in the holy scriptures. There cannot be a more certain way of knowing what is becoming Almighty God to do than by considering what he has in fact already done; and as he has performed numbers of miracles in different ages among his people, which he has carefully recorded in his holy scriptures for our instruction, if we attentively consider the ends for which these miracles were wrought, and which were actually obtained by them, we must of necessity conclude that these ends were most worthy of the divine interpotion by miracles, because expressly judged by Almighty

wisdom itself to be so. And if we farther see that the ends are the very same which, by the light of reason, we have found worthy of such interposition, this will illustrate the above conclusion of reason in the most convincing manner, and put it beyond all possibility of doubt, with those at least who believe the scriptures. But before we proceed to consider the facts themselve it will be necessary to premise a few observations up a what is understood by the moral perfection of intelligent creatures.

II. First, then, as Almighty God is a Being of infinite perfection in himself, and cannot possibly contradict himself by willing any thing contrary to his own divine perfection, it follows, that the divine will is the sovereign rule and standard of all righteousness and perfection; consequently, our perfection as rational and intelligent creatures must consist in our resemblance of God, that is, in our thinking and acting conformably to his will,—in having such sentiments, and in pursuing such a tenor of conduct as he requires from us; and the more we resemble God in this respect, the more holy, the more righteous, the more perfect we are. This is what our blessed Saviour so warmly recommends to us when he says, "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" and which he explains and confirms by his own example, when he assures us, that "his meat was to do the will of him that sent sent him;" and that this was the very ultimate end of his incarnation, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will," says he, but to do the will of him that sent me."

Secondly, When we consider such of the divine perfections as we are acquainted with, we immediately perceive a necessary connection between them and certain affections and dispositions of our minds, and a corresponding mode of action naturally resulting from these dispositions. These dispositions appear to us as natural consequences of those divine perfections from which they flow, and as most justly due to that sovereign Being whom these perfections reside. Thus the infinite

power of God aemands from us the most religious respect and veneration; his infinite justice requires our most awful fear of offending; his infinite veracity our most firm and unshaken belief in his word; his infinite sanctity our most pious veneration; his infinite wisdom our perfect submission to the orders and dispositions of his providence; his infinite goodness and innumerable benefits bestowed on us, loudly call for our most ardent love, gratitude, and confidence in him; his sovereign dominion demands our most profound subjection, and entire obedience; and all these his divine perfections together essentially require, upon our part, the most perfect resignation to his holy will, and an absolute and entire dependance upon him in all things. tion between those divine perfections and their corresponding dispositions in us, is evident at first sight to all who understand the terms, and the light by which we perceive it is a constitutional part of the human frame; it stands in no need of arguments to prove it; it convinces by being proposed and understood as much as any first principle whatever. Consequently, this connection is real; the divine perfections do actually require these corresponding duties and affections from us; it is the proper worship due to God from his creatures; it is therefore his will that we should render it to him, and our perfection consists in doing so. The same observations have place with regard to the feelings we have in our souls of the nature and obligations of our other moral duties; of which Mr. Beattie, in his Essay on Truth, very justly says, "The performance of certain actions, and the indulgence of certain affections, is attended with an agreeable feeling of a peculiar kind, which I call moral approbation; different actions and affections excite the opposite feeling of moral disapprobation: To relieve distress I find to be meritorious and praise-worthy; to pick a pocket I know to be blameable, and worthy of punishment: I am conscious that some actions are in my power, that others are not; that when I neglect to do what I ought to do, and can do, I deserve to be pur-

ished; and that when I act necessarily, or upon unavoid able and irresistible compulsion, I deserve neither punishment nor blame. Of all these sentiments I am as conscious and as certain as I am of my own existence. I cannot prove that I feel them, neither to myself nor to others; but that I do really feel them, is as evident to me as demonstration could make it.—I ought to be grate-iul for a favour received: Why? Because my conscience tells me so. How do you know you ought to do that of which your conscience enjoins the performance? I can give no further reason for it, but that I feel that such is my duty. And here the investigation must stop; or, if carried a little further, it must return to this point, I know that I ought to do what my conscience enjoins, because God is the Author of my constitution, and I obey his will when I act according to the principles of my constitution. Why do you obey the will of God? Because it is my duty. How do you know that? Because my conscience tells me so, etc."* To these just reflections we must further add, that we not only feel within us this sense of moral duty, this something which pushes us on to do, or omit certain actions, and to have, or not to have certain affections; but, moreover when we are conscious to ourselves of having these affections, and of acting conformably to them, we immediately feel the applause and approbation of this internal monitor, attended with a peaceful joy and content of mind; - and when we have them not, or act contrary to them, we are immediately punished by internal remorse and self-condemnation, as having acted in a manner contrary to our duty, and unworthy the dignity of our nature. The result of all these observations is, that the perfection of our nature consists in having such dispositions, and following such a mode of conduct as is agreeable to the will of our Creator, and such as he, who is our Sovereign Master, requires from us, and points out to us by this internal light which he has implanted in us.

Thirdly, If we examine what God Almighty has declared to us by revelation concerning this matter, we find it coincide with what is said above. "Let us hear," says he by the mouth of the wise man, "the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man "* That is, his whole duty, his whole happiness, his whole perfection; in word, his all. And, indeed, throughout the scriptures what do we find demanded of mankind by the great Au thor of our being, but to believe in him, to fear him, to hope in him, to thank and praise him, to serve and obey him; and—which comprehends all other duties in one word—to love and prefer him above all things, and to be ready to leave all things rather than, by sin, to offend and lose him? In the practice of these holy virtues consists the perfection of our duty, and consequently the perfection of our souls.

Fourthly, If we had no other feelings or inclinations in our hearts beside these above-mentioned, it would be an easy matter to comply with our duty, and render to our great Creator that just tribute of obedience and love which is so strictly due to him. But we find, from experience, that this is far from being the case; for we feel within our breasts another principle, quite opposite to the former-a violent bent and propensity to those things which our moral sense condemns. This strongly tends to avert our affections from God and place them on the creatures, and at the same time obscures these holy feelings, blunts the happiness which the soul would enjoy in encouraging them, and persuades us to seek for happiness in sensual enjoyments that are entirely opposite to, and destructive of the duties dictated to us by our conscience. This bent and inclination of the heart, which is called the sensual appetite, and our moral sense or conscience being thus directly opposite and contradictory to one another, are at perpetual variance, and excite that fight and war in our breasts, which is so afflicting to pious souls, and which St. Paul so patheti

cally describes from his own experience: 'I know," says he, "that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not: For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"* As these two principles are thus so opposite to one another, it is plainly impossible fully to satisfy them both; and we find by experience, that the more we encourage and gratify the one, the more we discourage and weaken the other. Hence, it is impossible our Creator should have implanted both these in our nature, with the view and intention that they should both be fully indulged and gratified. The question then is, which of the two ought we to indulge, which reject ? Which ought we to comply with, which to discourage? A little attention to their different qualities will enable us to answer these questions: For, first, We find the moral sense is always attended with the deliberate feeling of its being our duty to follow its calls; the sensual appetite has no such feeling joined to it, but consists in a blind, impetuous propensity of the heart towards its sensual objects. Secondly, Our compliance with the dictates of conscience is always followed with internal approbation, and a sense of having done well; and this approbation is always the greater the more violent have been the solicitations of sensuality. But when we in dulge the inclinations of the sensual appetite, we find n such self-approbation, but, on the contrary, we are tor mented with remorse and self-condemnation, which is always the more severe the greater length we had gone in sensual gratifications. Lastly, The most noble and exalted idea we can form to ourselves of human nature. is that of a person who should be entirely guided by the dictates of duty and conscience, and never influenced in any part of his conduct by selfish and sensual motives; and on the other hand, the most despicable idea we can have of our species, is that of a person enslaved to his passions, and totally lost to all sense of duty or moral virtue. From these observations it plainly follows, that our moral sense is placed in us as the delegate of God, to be under him our guide and director, and consequently that our constant endeavours ought to be to follow its dictates, and to mortify and subdue all risings of the

sensual appetite to the contrary.

Fifthly, The light of revelation strongly confirms this last conclusion; for by it we are assured that at the beginning man was not created with such jarring principles within him, but that the opposition to our duty which we at present feel from sensuality, is owing to the depravation of our nature from its original rectitude by sin; that the rebellion of sensuality is a defect of our nature, which it ought to be our daily care to amend, and that our perfection consists in opposing and mortifying all its corrupt inclinations, and by that means asserting the liberty of our souls, so that we may, with the greater ease and ardour, be united to our Creator, and render him that worship and homage which he requires from us. But to do this as we ought is no less difficult than important. Our blessed Saviour calls it, doing violence to ourselves; St. Paul, with all the saints, complains of the great pain and trouble which this spiritual warfare cost him; and experience daily shows, from the small number of those who have courage earnestly to undertake and go through it, and from the many furious battles and rude assaults they have to sustain, how arduous is the task to overcome this corrupt nature of ours, and of course, how glorious the victory! On the other hand, Almighty God, who most ardently desires we should gain this victory, because only it will entitle us to the crown of incorruptible glory,-for "none shall be crowned but he who has lawfully fought,"

leaves nothing undone on his part to encourage and enable us to make this sacred conquest. incites us to it by the strictest commands, by the most affectionate solicitations, by threatening us with the most dreadful evils if we neglect it, by promising us the most endearing happiness if we obtain it, by assuring us, that he is always at hand to assist us, and "will never suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear," but, if we be not wanting on our part, "will always give us strength to come off with victory."* And finally, by declaring to us in his own sacred word, that, in order to engage his people the more effectually in this warfare, and enable them to promote the perfection of their souls, by adorning them with virtue, he has at different times, and on many different occasions, been pleased to perform the most stupendous and amazing miracles. Hence our conclusion necessarily follows, that to procure the moral perfection of our souls is an end worthy of the divine interposition by miracles, and that Almighty God himself judges it to be so, having actually wrought many miracles for that purpose.

Sixthly, When we consider that incomprehensible and interminable bliss which is prepared for the good, and that eternal punishment which awaits the wicked in the next world, it will easily be allowed that all we can enjoy or suffer in this life is a mere nothing, when put in competition with the other; and consequently, that it is a matter of the smallest importance how we be in this mortal pilgrimage, provided we can only avoid hell and obtain heaven when we come to the end of our journey. What did all the wealth and enjoyments of the rich glutton avail him when at his death he was buried in hell-fire, where he could not command a single drop of water to cool his parched tongue? And, on the contrary, what worse was the poor beggar Lazarus for all his sufferings in this life, when at his death his soul was carried to a place of rest and peace, and he is now in

possession of the fulness of celestial joy and happiness? As, therefore, we are placed in this world for no other end but to work out and secure our salvation, and as all the goods and evils of this life are so disposed by the divine providence that they may serve as means for acquiring this end, it is therefore, a most certain truth, that they in no other respect deserve to be valued or esteemed by us, than inasmuch as they conduce to our avoiding the eternal misery, and acquiring eternal happi-If, therefore, the abundance of the goods of this life should in us, as in the rich glutton, prove a hinderance to that great end, we ought doubtless to look upon them as the greatest of evils; and, on the contrary, if the sufferings which the miseries this world can inflict upon us should prove the means of more effectually securing our salvation, as was the case with Lazarus, we ought to esteem these miseries as the greatest and mostvaluable blessings. It is true, indeed, it requires a great degree of Christian perfection to have an experimental persuasion of this truth; and it must be owned, that by far the greatest bulk of mankind are exceedingly affected with present goods and evils. We are naturally bent on procuring and enjoying the former, as if we were capable of no other happiness but what we receive from them; and we have the utmost aversion for the latter, as if they were the only real evils. In consequence of this natural disposition of our hearts, nothing makes a greater impression upon us than to be plentifully supplied with the one, and to be defended and delivered from the other; and provided this disposition does not prove a hinderance to our eternal happiness, but is properly regulated by reason and religion, it is far from being blameable, but may be made to serve for the best of purposes. This frame of the human mind Almighty God well knows, and therefore, condescending with amazing goodness to our weakness, he makes use of it as a means to engage us the more in his service, by promising to give us all the necessary good things of this life, and to preserve us from its evils, so far as is consistent with our

eternal happiness, if we continue faithful and obedien to him. In order to convince us the more effectually of his sincerity in this promise, he has been pleased, on numberless occasions, so to order the miracles he wrought in favour of his servants, for the advancement of their souls in virtue, that they should at the same time procure them the greatest temporal blessings, or deliver them from temporal miseries and dangers. By this means, such miracles make the deeper impression on the mind, and more effectually excite those holy sentiments of gratitude and love which he requires from us. And, on the other hand, he not only threatens obdurate sinners with all manner of temporal evils, in order to frighten them from their wicked ways, but has even judged it worthy of himself to work most astonishing miracles in punishment of sinners, both with a view to their own conversion, and also by these examples to excite in the hearts of others, a salutary fear of offending him. I shall now proceed to show this from the facts themselves.

III. When at the beginning God created man, he gavehim a full and sufficient knowledge of his Maker, and of the service which was due to him: but when, in processof time, from the corruption of man's heart by sin, he forgot his God and revolted from his service, the Supreme Being was pleased to make choice of one nation, which by a particular dispensation of his providence, he would preserve from the general corruption, and always keep constant in the knowledge and service of the true God. This chosen people had been for a long time oppressed in a cruel manner by the Egyptians, who kept them in slavery, tal affast the time arrived when the God of their athers was resolved not only to deliver them from their bondage, but also to give them an ample external revela tion of his will, and of all the worship and service which he required from them; that is, to plant his true religion among them, and to teach them the way to be truly happy here and hereafter. To do this several things were required; first, to convince them that it was he himself. the God of heaven and earth, who declared his will to

them; secondly, to induce, them to receive and obey his will so manifested to them; and, thirdly, to do this in a manner adapted to the nature of the human heart, by interesting the affections, especially those of love, hope, and fear, in the performance of what he required of them. Now, to gain these ends, we find that Almighty God was pleased to make use of miracles, and with such profusion as plainly shows that he esteems the moral perfection of the soul of man - worthy to warrant the subversion of the most universal laws of nature in order to procure it. For this purpose, he makes choice of his servant Moses; appears to him in the wilderness after a very miraculous manner in a burning bush; tells him who he is, what he has a mind to do for his people, and his intention to make use of him as his instrument for that end. Had Moses all at once agreed to this proposal, had he seemed pleased with the charge and honour conferred upon him, and been elated in his own mind on that account, it might have been alleged that this was all a delusion, and that Moses was only the dupe of his own heated imagination But this is so far from being the case, that Moses, on hearing the intention of God, is greatly alarmed, objects to the proposal, refuses to undertake the charge, and alleges in excuse the difficulty of the enterprise, his own incapacity, and lastle, that the people themselves would give no credit to him, a single person, who had been long absent from among them, and of course little known, except perhaps by name, to most of them. To obviate these difficulties, and convince Moses himself that this was the work of God, and, at the same time, to give him credentials with the people, and a sure them of his divine commission, what does the Almighty do! He has recourse to miracles as the proper means for this purpose; he turns the rod of Moses into a serpent, and then into a rod again; he in an instant makes his hand white with leprosy and in an instant restores it again to its former soundness; and he not only performs these miracles before Moses for his own satisfaction, but he gives him the power of doing them also

before the people for their conviction "that they may believe," says he, "that the Lord God of their Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee."* And a little after he tells him, that if the people should not give credit to these first signs, then he should turn the water of the river, when poured out upon the dry land, into red blood in their presence. By these miracles Moses is convinced, he undertakes the charge, goes to the people, delivers his commission, and performs the miracles as his credentials. These had immediately the desired effect; for when the people were called together, and "Aaron spoke all these words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and DID THE SIGNS in the sight of the people, the people believed,

and bowed down their heads and worshipped." †

IV. Here, then, one main point was gained by means of miracles: the people of Israel were convinced that Moses was sent by the God of their fathers to deliver them from their present misery, and carry them to the promised land. It is true this was the easiest part of Moses' mission. The affliction under which the people groaned, their ardent desire to be delivered from it, the expectation they had that their deliverance would certainly come, and that they would be freed from that Egyptian slavery, and brought to the possession of that happy land which had been so often promised by Almighty God to their forefathers, would doubtless dispose their minds readily to embrace every proposal of that kind, and to give credit to every appearance of the approach of that happiness which they so much desired and expected. But it was not so easy a matter to convince Pharaoh. He had none of these prejudices in favour of Moses or his commission:—on the contrary, he had the strongest bias against it, both from his religious principles, and from his worldly interest. Accordingly, though God Almighty commanded the same miracles to be wrought in his presence as had served to convince the Israelites, t

^{*} Exod. iv. 5. † Exod. iv. 30, 31. ‡ See Exod. vii.

they made no impression on him; nay, he looked upon them all as an imposture, and called in his own magicians, who by their enchantments performed the same things that Moses did. See here the admirable conduct of divine providence. He permits this opposition of Pharaoh; he permits his magicians to exert their utmost power, and to imitate the miracles wrought in his name, on purpose to show their determined will to oppose what he required, and how averse they were from any design of favouring Moses, which might have been suspected had they all at once, without opposition, acknowledged the divinity of his commission and miracles. But after permitting this contest of miracles for a time, God at last asserts his own honour. He works, by the hands of his servant, such miracles as far exceeded all the power of the magicians, and forced from the mouth of these his declared enemies an express acknowledgment, "That the finger of God was there." Nothing could be more honourable for the cause of God than this confession; nothing more convincing to his people that Moses was sent by him; and, consequently, nothing could more powerfully prepare their minds and hearts for receiving the religion he was soon after to reveal to them by the hands of this his holy servant. But Almighty God was pleased to do still more. Pharaoh, through the high permission of God's unsearchable judgments, still hardens his heart, and God immediately works more wonders. As Pharaoh's hardness of heart proceeded chiefly from his worldly interest, which made him averse to comply with what God required by letting the people go, for he feared they would not return, and that he would thereby be deprived of their service; therefore does God work such miracles as served both to prove the divine commission of Moses, and, at the same time, to punish Pharaoh in that wherein he sinned, by destroying his country, his cattle, his goods, and his people, in order by this means the more readily to break his stubborn heart, and extort his consent to what was required of him. Now, in these miracles wrought for this end, we observe. first,

that they were for the most part above all the power of the magicians · secondly, that they were generally foretold before they happened; thirdly, that the effects were removed at the exact time appointed, and this appoin. ment sometimes left to Pharaoh's own choice; fourthly, that they were commonly done at the word of Moses; fifthly, that a distinction was made between the Egyptians and the people of God, who were freed from those plagues with which the former were tormented; sixthly, that this last circumstance was foret ld and done on purpose, as Almighty God says himself to Pharaoh, "That thou mayest know that I am the Lord in the midst or These circumstances clearly proved by whom these miracles were wrought, and tended evidently to imprint in the minds of Pharaoh and his servants, as well as of God's people, the most thorough conviction, that the Lord was the only true God, and that Moses was his servant commissioned and sent by And God himself assures us, that for this very purpose he wrought these miracles, attended with all their circumstances; for thus he says to Pharaoh, "I will at this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, that thou mayest know there is none like me on all the earth."+ And to his own people he says, that he showed all these his signs before Pharaoh, "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them, that ye may know that I am the Lord.";

V. In this manner did Almighty God show from his own conduct, that he deems the santification of his rational creatures, an end worthy to be attained by working miracles; and we see also how admirably his infinite wisdom adapts the miracles he performs to the end intended to be gained by them. He knew the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, and its cause; it was necessary, therefore, that the miracles wrought, to convince him that Moses was

ent from God, and to procure his obedience to the divine will, should be such as would strike at the root of the evil, and bend his hardened heart to a compliance with what God required from him. He knew also the rudeness of his own people, their obstinacy, their proneness to all the superstitions of the Egyptians, and how ready they would be to leave his service upon every occasion; it was therefore necessary not only that the miracles wrought should be sufficient to prove that the commission of Moses was from God himself; but also that they should be calculated to work upon the passions of the people; convince them it was their only true interest to serve their God; give them a confidence in him, and strike them with a salutary dread and fear of offending him. How admirable were the wonders wrought calculated for this purpose! The particular protection shown to his people, the visible difference made between them and the Egyptians, the design of their deliverance intended by all these wonders, and the actual accomplishment of it at last, were doubtless the most convincing proofs how much they were the favourites of heaven, and what happiness they might justly expect by faithfully serving that God who had done such great things for them. On the other hand, the severe and dreadful punishments sent on Pharaoh for his disobedience, could not fail to imprint in their hearts the deepest sentiments of fear and dread of offending God by letting them see what they had to expect if they should follow his example. And, whereas Moses was the person by whom God intended to make known his will to his people, and it was therefore necessary they should have the utmost reverence for him as the ambassador of God, for this reason all these miracles are wrought at the word of Moses; nature seems to be entirely at his command; he foretells beforehand the punishment to be inflicted on Pharaoh for his refusing to obey the orders of God delivered from his mouth, and upon his speaking the word, or lifting up his rod, or stretching out his hand, what he had foretold is forthwith brought to pass. What steps could have been taken more adapted to the

ends proposed than these were? What could have conduced with greater efficacy to dispose this people to receive from the hands of Moses whatever revelation Almighty God should be pleased to make to them by his

agency.

VI. But the goodness of Almighty God did not stop here. No sooner are the people gone from Pharaoh, than he immediately exerts his Almighty power in their favour, by performing more stupendous miracles for this purpose than any they had hitherto seen. He had resolved, for his own wise ends, to conduct them through a wild and barren desert, where there was no path, nor any human guide to lead them. To supply this want, he sends an angel from heaven to be their conductor; and this heavenly spirit, the better to assist the favourite people committed to his charge, assumes a visible form, adapted to their necessities; "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and by night."* He shows them the road they are to go; he covers them from the scorching heats of the sun by day and dispels by his splendour the darkness of the night; he discovers to them the proper time for proceeding on their journey, and when and how long they ought to take their rest :-- "When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the Children of Israel journeved, and the place where the cloud abode, there the Children of Isreal pitched their tents; at the commandment of the Lord, the Children of Isreal journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched; as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents."† What sentiments of confidence and love must this continued proof of the divine goodness have naturally produced in this people!

VII. Pharaoh and his servants no sooner heard that the Israelites had fled, than they forgot all the scourges they had suffered upon their account, and vexation for

the loss of their service getting the ascendant in their hearts, they repented of what they had done;—"why have we done this," say they, "that we have let Israel go from serving us?"* Pharaoh therefore, immediately resolves to pursue them with his army and bring them back to their former slavery. His people readily agree to the proposal, and he comes upon the Israelites with all his hosts, at a place where they are hemmed in by the wilderness and the Red Sea, so that there was no human possibility for them to escape falling into his hands. But their great God again interposes in their behalf by new miracles; their heavenly conductor, in the first place, changes his situation from front to rear, to be a barrier between his people and their enemies: "And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud went from before their face and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and (see another miracle!) it was a cloud of darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night."+ Next morning, to complete their deliverance, Moses, by God's command, stretched forth his hand over the sea, and immediately it is divided into two parts, leaving the dry ground in the middle, and the waters standing up as a wall upon the right hand and upon the left. The Israelites astonished at this visible protection of heaven, boldly entered the untrodden path, and safely pass through to the other shore. The Egyptians blinded by their passion, and bent upon what they had in view, madly continued to follow them, in hopes at last to overtake them; but the time appointed for completing the punishment of their obdurate hearts, is now at hand and their madness proves their ruin. No sooner have the people of God safely crossed over, than Moses again stretches out his hand over the waters, as if to tell them they were now at liberty to return to their usual channel,

^{*} Exod. xiv. 5.

'And immediately the sea returned to his strength, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the hosts of Pharaoh—there remained not so much as one of them: and thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore."* What a visible instance of the almighty hand of God!—What a stupendous miracle!— What a suspension of the laws of nature !—And all this for what end ?-For that end surely which was actually produced by it; "And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses."+ The great end therefore which Almighty God proposed by doing such wondrous things, was to fill the hearts of his people with a salutary fear of offending him, and to gain authority and credit with them both for himself and his servant; and by this means dispose their minds for receiving with entire submission that sacred law, which he was soon after going to reveal to them by the mouth of his holy prophet. Consequently these are ends to attain which God himself judges it most worthy of him to interpose by miracles, and even by miracles of the first order.

VIII. The more we proceed, the more convincing proofs do we find of this truth in the conduct of divine providence. The people being now entered into that vast and barren wilderness, through which it pleased God to lead them, find themselves very soon exposed to all the horrors of hunger and thirst, and in utter want of all the necessaries of life. In this dismal situation, with misery and death staring them in the face, their hearts began to fail them; they murmured against Moses for bringing them out of Egypt "to kill them," as they stid, "in the wilderness."† They looked upon all that had been done as his work alone, and called in doubt his being sent by Almighty God for their deliverance. This was doubtless most inexcusable in them, considering

Exod. xiv. 27, etc. † Exod. xiv. 31. † Exod. xvi. 3.

the many convincing proofs they had received of the divine mission of Moses; but the bowels of mercy of their God had pity upon them; and, condescending to their weakness, he again exerts his almighty power in their behalf, and wrought still more wonderful miracles among them, to convince them that not Moses of himself, but "that he, their Lord, had brought them out of the land of Egypt."* "And ye shall know," said he upon this occasion, "that I am the Lord your God." t-For this purpose he rains down upon them a most wonderful food from heaven, a food which was altogether miraculous, both in the manner of its being given, and in all its properties. In order to try them, however, whether or not they were " really willing to walk in his law," and had that filial confidence in him, with which so many wonders wrought in their favour ought justly to have inspired them, he orders only a certain quantity of this heavenly food to be gathered at a time-so much for each person by the day; but as he wanted the seventh day to be kept holy as his Sabbath, and spent in his service, without any avocation by worldly affairs, he allows a double quantity for each to be gathered on the sixth day to serve for this purpose; he also ordered that what was thus gathered each day should be made use of in that day, and that none of it should be left till next morning. It is easy to see the design of Almighty God in these orders, which was to try their obedience; to root out from their hearts all anxiety and solicitude for the concerns of this life, and to nourish in their souls a perfect confidence and total reliance on the divine providence and protection for every thing they stood in need of. Now, see the miraculous properties of this manna, and how excellently well it was adapted to those ends!-When they went out to gather it, "some gathered more and some less than the measure prescribed, but when they brought it home and met it, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered

^{*}Exod. xvi. 6. †Exod. xvi. 12. ‡Exod. xvi. 4

little had no lack—some of them left of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stunk-but what remained over the sixth day, they laid it up till the morning-and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein;" it bore also without difficulty all the force of the fire. but melted with the slender heat of the rising sun; lastly, this miraculous food was rained down upon them every morning of the six days of the week, but "on the seventh day they found none."-See here what a collection of miracles, which continued with that people, as a standing proof of the finger of God, during the space of forty years that they remained in the wilderness, and even till such time as they eat the new fruits of an inhabited land; nay, what is still more surprising, a measure of this very manna, which could not continue one night without corruption and worms, when kept contrary to the command, was ordered by God to be laid up in the ark before the Lord, where it was preserved sound and uncorrupted for many ages, in order that their latest "posterity might see the bread with which God fed them in the wilderness," which was a standing and perpetual miracle among them. See for all this, Exod. xvi.

IX. The joy which this heavenly boon occasioned was soon damped for want of water, which was not to be found in that dry and barren desert; upon which they began again to murmur, and immediately a new miracle is wrought to supply them. Moses strikes the hard rock with his rod, and forthwith gushes forth a stream of limpid water, sufficient for that whole multitude and their cattle.* Soon after this they began to tire of the manna, and calling to mind the animal food, both fish and flesh, they had enjoyed in Egypt, they murmured again for want of them; and again a new miracle is wrought to gratify their desire, and give them flesh in abundance. Moses himself seemed confounded when God promised to supply them with flesh, looking

upon it as a thing incredible in the place where they were: "The people," says he to Almighty God, "are six hundred thousand footmen, and thou hast said I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month; shall the flocks and herds be slain for them to suffice them?" But God immediately checks him, by sim ly putting him in mind that he had promised it; "And the Lord said unto Moses; is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not;"—and accordingly the very next day he sent them flesh to the full.* Finally, to complete the proof of his affection for them, and thereby to increase their confidence and love for him, he gave such force and durability to their clothes, that from the day they came out of Egypt, during the forty years he led them in the wilderness, "your clothes," as Moses expresses it to the people themselves, "are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot."† In all this we see how much Almighty God thought it worthy of himself to perform the most amazing miracles, in order to gain the love and confidence of his people, and to dispose them to embrace, with all deference and respect, the law and religion he was going to establish among them.

X. We come now to the revelation itself; and here we find a new scene opened to our view; a scene of miracles even superior, if possible, in their amazing greatness to any that had gone before them. Two days were employed beforehand to prepare the people for this great event, and upon the third day the great God descends in a visible form of fire in the sight of the whole multitude, attended with all those ensigns of majesty and grandeur which could render his appearance awful and tremendous. A thick cloud covers the mountain, the sound of trumpets is heard on all hands exceeding loud, flashes of lightning break forth from the clouds, peals of thunder roar on every side, and the whole

mountain trembles with violent earthquakes. From the midst of this grand apparatus God himself, with an audible voice, speaks aloud to his people, and pronounces, with his own divine mouth, in the hearing of all the multitude, the sacred law which he was pleased to give them. The people, spectators of this awful scene, heard with amazement the heavenly voice; and seeing "the hunders and the lightning, and the noise of the trumpets, nd the mountain smoking, they were exceedingly afraid, and removed, and stood afar off, and said to Moses, speak thou to us and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die."* Nothing could serve more effectually to convince this people that their God was the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, than what they heard and saw upon this occasion; nothing could more deeply imprint in their minds a veneration and dread for that Almighty Being who spoke to them in so awful a manner; nothing could contribute more to secure the utmost respect for Moses, whom they saw so highly honoured by their great Creator, and make them receive from him, with the most religious deference, whatever Almighty God should afterwards be pleased to reveal to them by his means, which was one principal end he had in view in his visible appearance among them, as he says himself to Moses, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever."†—But this deserves to be considered a little more particularly.

XI. In the first place we see, in the awful account given us of this memorable event, a striking example of the infinite goodness of God, and the ardent desire he has of the moral perfection of his rational creatures. What more convincing proof of this than to see this great Being condescend to reveal to them his holy will and law as the proper rule to conduct them to that perfection, and to do this in such a manner, and in such circumstances, as could not possibly fail to give them the

[·] Exod. xx.

most entire conviction that it was the God of nature nimself, the sovereign Lord and Master of the universe: who spoke to them, whilst they saw with their own eyes how much all nature was subservient to him on this occasion? But as it would have been more than human frailty could bear, had all the particulars of the religion which God intended to give his people been delivered to them in so dreadful a manner, we see, in the second place, with what infinite wisdom Almighty God brings about his ends with the most undoubted certainty, but a: the same time with the greatest sweetness; the awfulness of his appearance fills their minds with such dread and fear, that they themselves pray he would never speak to them again in such a manner, for they could not stand it. What he had already done fully convinced them that he was their sole and Sovereign Lord, and that Moses was sent and commissioned by him; that therefore it would be sufficient to declare to Moses what further orders he should please to give them, and they would receive them from him as the dictates of God himself. Now what was this but the very disposition of mind which God required in them, as the end proposed in all the wondrous works he had wrought among them? And, therefore, when they expressed themselves in this manner, he highly approved of what they said, and replied to Moses, "they have well spoken that which they have spoken."* Lastly, from this whole series of repeated miracles,—of which we may justly say, that every one of them is more surprising than another,—we have a most convincing proof how much Almighty God esteems the moral perfection of his creatures; that is, the implanting and confirming in their hearts a firm belief of what he reveals to them as his truth, a fear of offending him, a filial confidence in his goodness, and a sincere love and obedience to him as their Supreme God and Sovereign Lord; how much, I say, Almighty God esteems these things worthy of his procuring, even though

^{*} Deut. xviii. 17.

by the temporary subversion, if I may say so, of the most constant laws of nature. Now, that these were the very ends which he had in view in working so many wonders among his people, is evident from his own repeated declarations, several of which are related above; to which I shall add the following, as being particularly expressive of this truth. It is taken from Deuteronomy, chapter iv., where Moses, exhorted the people to love and serve their God, who had done such great things for them, speaks to them as follows: "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as thou hast heard, and live? or hath God essayed to take him a nation from the midst of another nation by tempt ations, by signs and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is GOD; THERE IS NONE ELSE BESIDE HIM—Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else: thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and commandments, etc." In consequence of this we find, that the people unanimously resolved to love and serve their God, who had done such great things for them; and after declaring their firm resolution of doing so, Almighty God, to show how ardently he desired this from them, and that he desired it with a view to their real and lasting happiness, expresses himself to Moses in this most tender and affectionate manner: "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever."* In all which it manifestly appears what were the ends the divine wisdom had in view in the many and amazing miracles wrought among this people †

* Deut. v. 29.

[†] See also Deut. ix. x. xi., Psalm lxxviii. (alias lxxvii.) and Psalm cv (alias civ.) through the whole, where the same truth is most beautifully declared.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE GENERAL ENDS OF MIRACLES, AS DISCOVERED BY REVELATION.

I. What we have seen in the preceding chapter must convince all those who receive the scriptures as the word of God, that to excite in the minds and hearts of those to whom he is pleased to reveal his will, those holy sentiments of faith, confidence, love, gratitude, and obedience, in which the moral perfection of our souls properly consists, are ends truly worthy of God to procure by miracles, and are judged to be so by God himself, who has, in fact, frequently performed the most stupendous miracles for that purpose. But as this is a subject of the greatest importance, I must pursue it a little further, and show from the same sacred records, some more of those general ends which God has been pleased to procure by the same means, and which either directly or indirectly conduced to the happiness and perfection sometimes of whole nations, and sometimes even of single persons only. And first, as we have seen in what manner he established religion among his people, let us go on to consider what he thought proper to do in order to preserve it.

II. Though the miraculous manner in which Almighty God was pleased to reveal and establish his religion, was fully sufficient to convince all who witnessed, that it was his work, as also all those who in after ages should believe its miraculous establishment upon the tradition and testin ony by which it was to be handed down to them; yet, as the divine wisdom well knew the corruption of the heart of man, how impatient it is of restraint, how ready to shake off the yoke and grasp at every pretence of doing so, and consequently foresaw how apt men would be in after ages to reject the belief of this first miraculous establishment of religion, if not supported by

proofs that carry conviction along with them; so we find in fact, that in all succeeding ages when his religion was in any danger of being corrupted or destroyed, Almighty God was always ready to defend it by the same means by which he at first established it, and judged the preservation of it when in danger no less worthy his divine interposition by miracles, than he did its first

establishment among his people.

III. Soon after the death of Joshua and of his contemporaries, who had been eve-witnesses of all the glorious things which Almighty God had done for that nation, the memory of those wonders began to wax weak among them, "the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel. And Joshua died, and also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers, and there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord nor yet the works which he had done for In consequence of this, for a great number of years, that is, during that whole period that Israel was governed by judges, they from time to time "did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Balaam, and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, and provoked the Lord to anger."† In this dangerous state of religion, Almighty God was not wanting in defence of his own cause; nay, we may justly say that he was working one continued miracle among them during all this period, by literally and daily fulfilling those prophecies which had been made long before. by Moses. This great man foresaw and foretold their future infidelity, and at the same time declared to them what would be the consequences both of their fidelity and obedience to the Lord their God, and of their apostacy from his service. He assured them, that if they adhered to him and to his holy law, every temporal

^{*} Judges ii.

blessing would be their portion; "If you walk in my statutes," says Almighty God to them by the mouth of this holy prophet, "and keep my commandments and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase—and I will give peace in the land, and you shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword—and I will walk among you, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."* But if, on the contrary, they should forsake the Lord their God, abandon his service and prove disobedient to bim, he assured them that all tempo ral evils would be sent upon them as the just punishment of their ingratitude: "But if you will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these my commandments-I also will do this unto you, I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning agueand I will set my face against you and ye shall be slain before your enemies, and they that hate you shall reign over you," † etc. Now, what is the whole history of the Judges but a literal verification of these prophecies? See the second chapter of that book, which, in this respect, is an abridgment of the whole. And as the accomplishment of prophecies, which had been predicted long before, is an undoubted proof that God is the author of them, (for prophecy is a miracle supereminently the work of God,) nothing could contribute more feelingly to convince that people that the religion they had received from their fathers was from God, than that daily experience they had of the immediate consequences, which exactly followed as had been foretold, according as they either adhered to their religion and their God, or became disobedient to him.

IV. Neither were there wanting several particular miracles during this period, wrought either mediately or immediately for the same end, as when Deborah fore-told the victory to be gained over Siserah, and the manner of his death; also Gideon's fleece, and the deliver-

[•] See the whole passage, Levit. xxvi. See also Deut. xxviii. † Ibid.

ance of the people from the captivity of the Madianites, by the miraculous victory he obtained over them; what happened at the birth of Samson, his amazing strength, with that most extraordinary miracle of giving him abundance of water to quench his thirst out of the dry jaw-bone of an ass; Samuel's procuring thunder and lightning in an instant on a fine clear harvest day; all which shows how attentive Almighty God was to defend the purity and truth of his religion by miracles, from the dangers to which it was exposed during this period of the judges. These now mentioned we shall have occasion to take notice of afterwards in a more particular manner. But there is also another famous passage of this period which deserves a little more attention here. Under the government of the high priest Eli, God in punishment of the sins of his people, permitted the ark of his covenant, which was the glory of their nation, to be taken from them and carried away by the Philistines. This was a subject of great triumph and exultation to these heathens, but of the utmost affliction and humiliation to the Israelites. But though Almighty God was pleased, by this means, to humble and punish his people for their sins, he did not fail to vindicate the honour of his religion, and to defend the ark, which was the most sacred testimony of his covenant with them, from the insults of his enemies, by repeated miracles wrought for this purpose; by which means these infidels were forced to acknowledge his power and authority both over them and over all their gods, and at last to restore the ark with honour to the people. When it fell into their hands, they placed it in the temple of Dagon their god Next morning that idol was found lying prostrate upon the ground as it were in adoration before the ark of the Most High God. When raised up again by its votaries and put into its own place, the day after it was found not only fallen down as before, but even broken into different pieces upon the threshold; Almighty God disdaining to have an idol standing beside his ark, or placed upon an equal footing with it. He smote all the people of every city

and its neighborhood whither they carried the ark, with sore biles and shameful distempers, which carried them off in great numbers; so that the people of that city cried out: "The ark of the god of Israel shall not abide with us, for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god;" and when, at last, forced by these chastisements, they resolved to send it home again to the Israelites, they put it to the test of a miracle to show whether what had happened to them was from God upon account of the ark, or if it was only an ordinary accident of life; and God was pleased to grant the very sign they demanded, to convince them that what had happened to them was from him in defence of his religion, and of the sanctity of that sacred deposit, which for his own just and wise ends, he had permitted to fall into their hands.

V. During the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, there was no attempt made against religion, and accordingly we find no miracles wrought in these reigns directly in its defence. But after Solomon's death, when Jeroboam was made king of the ten tribes, and in a most ungrateful manner, through his false and worldly politics, endeavoured to seduce his people from the service of God and lead them to idolatry, immediately we find Almighty God interposing in defence of his religion, and asserting its truth against its enemies by miraeles. After Jeroboam's defection, the first public solemnity in honour of his idolatry was the time chosen by God to appear in his own cause. When a number of people were present, and the sacrilegious altar prepared, and the king ready to burn incense upon it, a prophet sent by God stands forth, and prophesied against the altar in these words, "O altar, altar, says the Lord, behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."* This prophecy we find literally accomplished many years after-

wards.* But that Jeroboam and all the people migh know that it was a true prophecy, which should be fulfilled in its own time, another is made to be accomplished before their eyes, viz. that that very altar, against which the former prophecy was made, should all of a sudden be rent into two, and the ashes that were upon it be poured out upon the ground. This is given by the prophet as a sign to convince them of the truth of the former. But before this sign was accomplished, another miracle intervened to confirm it still further. The unhappy king, incensed at the prophet for what he had said, "put forth his hand from the altar, saying, lay hold on him; and his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him;" and immediately the other sign was accomplished, "the altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord." Then the whole was completed by another miracle; for the king, astonished at what had happened, "said to the man of God, intreat now the Lord thy God, and pray for me that my hand may be restored to me again: and the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before." † Now, what was the end for which all these miracles were wrought, but to convince the king and all the people of the greatness of their guilt, in leaving the religion of their fathers, and consequently to vindicate that true religion against all the endeavours of Jeroboam to destroy it?

VI. Some time after this, when a child of Jeroboam fell sick, being anxious about him, he directed his wife to disguise herself and go to the prophet Ahijah, (who had formerly foretold that he should be made king of the ten tribes,) and enquire of him what would be the fate of the child.—The prophet was then very old and had lost his sight; but before the queen's arrival, Almighty God discovered her coming to his servant, told

him upon what errand she came, and what answer to give her.—Accordingly, upon her entering the door of his house, he immediately addressed her by name, and reproaching her with her husband's perfidy and ingratitude to God, he predicted that in punishment of his great sin, all his family should be cut off, and not so much as one of his posterity be left, and that in process of time all his people whom he had seduced from their God, should be reduced to the greatest misery, overcome by their enemies, and carried away captives to a strange country. As a sign of the truth of these prophecies, he declared to her, that as soon as she returned and set her foot within the city, her child should die; all which came to pass accordingly as foretold by this prophet. Here again we see miracles proper to God alone, namely, predicting future events, one of which was nigh at hand, the other to be fulfilled in future ages, the first being given as a proof of the certainty of the latter, till it also should be accomplished in its proper time; and all this to defend the true religion, and show those who had abandoned it the enormity of their crime.

VII. The next public and violent attack upon religion was made by that impious prince Achab, who having married a heathen woman, was pushed on by her to the utmost extravagance, so as to murder all the prophets of God, and persecute his servants, in order thereby to destroy religion entirely, and force the people to idolatry. In this critical conjuncture the great Elijah, r Elias, was raised up by God as a bulwark to defend is truth, and put a stop to the torrent of impiety which was threatening to overflow the land. The first step the prophet took for this purpose was to inform the king before hand, that "there should neither be dew nor rain upon the earth for three years, but according to his word."* Thereby intimating, that God Almighty had, in a manner, put the rain and dew in his hands, that as long as he pleased none should fall, and at his desire it

should be sent again upon the earth. And what he said was literally fulfilled. Not a single drop fell for three years and a half, till the prophet, by his prayers, obtained it again. The consequences of this drought were dreadful; famine and misery destroyed the whole country, both man and beast. But what more convincing proof could he given the king of the evil of his way, and of the truth of that holy religion which he was persecuting? And that this extraordinary power was given to Elias, and this severe scourge sent upon the people for this very end, to convince the king of his wickedness, the prophet expressly told him, when he said, "It is not I that have troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandment of the Lord, and followed Baalim."*

VIII. The prophet finding that what he had said and done made little impression on the king, addresses himself to the people; and in order to convince them of the falsity of those pretended gods whom they had been induced by the king to adore, and that the God of their fathers was the only true God, he invites them to put the case to a fair trial, and offers, though single and alone, to sustain the cause of God against all the prophets of Baal, who were four hundred and fifty men. The method he proposed for deciding this grand ques cion was equally plain to the meanest capacity, and convincingly decisive; it was to refer the case to their gods themselves, and leave it to them to defend their own cause by performing the miracle demanded for that purpose. He proposed that each side should prepare a sacrifice, and call upon their respective Gods, and the God that answered by fire should be esteemed the only true God. The proposal was accepted with universal applause, and the prophets of Baal durst not refuse the challenge; accordingly they first took a bullock, cut it in pieces, laid it on wood, but without any fire under it, and called upon their god Baal from

morning till the time of "the evening sacrifice; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."* Then Elijah in his turn built an altar to he Lord, and dug a large trench round about it, which e filled with water, that the miracle he was going to work might be the more memorable; then he put the wood in order, and laid the bullock on the wood, and made a short prayer to God, begging him to grant the miracle desired; "and let it be known, says he, this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word—that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again."-Scarce had he finished this prayer, when immediately "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."† This was too glaring and convincing a proof not to have its desired effect; accordingly, all the multitude of the people confounded and amazed, "fell on their faces, and they said, the Lord he is God, the Lord he is God."

IX. This stupendous miracle must have made some impression on the heart of Achab; and in fact we find, that when Elijah, immediately after it, ordered all the prophets of Baal to be put to death as seducers of the people, the king made no objection. The goodness of God, desirous to improve these good seeds that were sown in the heart of Achab, was pleased soon after to work other miracles in his favour, which were at the same time, directly intended to prove that he was the only true God. The king of Syria wanting to pick a quarrel with Achab, sends some very insidious messages and haughty demands to him; which not being complied with, he raises a vast army, and comes to besiege Achab in Samaria; upon this a prophet comes to Achab from God with this message,—"Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold I will deliver it into thine

hand this day, AND THOU SHALT KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD;" and that the hand of God might be the more manifest in this victory, it was to be gained only by two hundred and thirty-two men; which happened accordingly, and the enemy were "slain with very great slaughter." To wipe off this disgrace, the Syrians returned again next year in vast numbers (before whom the whole army of Israel was like two little flocks of kids,) and vainly boasted that the Gods of the Israelites being Gods of the hills, were therefore stronger than themselves the preceding year; but now they would keep to the valleys, and would surely gain the victory. Here the honour of the true God was attacked by these infidels, and therefore a prophet is sent to Achab with this message. - "Thus sayeth the Lord, because the Syrians have said the Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys: therefore I will deliver all this multitude into thine hand, and YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD."* Achab accordingly gained a most complete victory, and humbled the Syrians exceedingly.

X. It is needless to make many reflections upon these plain facts; they speak for themselves, and are the most obvious and convincing proofs, that, to preserve the true religion which God has once established, is esteemed by him an object truly worthy his care; and that it is highly becoming his divine wisdom and goodness to perform the greatest miracles in its defence. Those miracles we have seen above were wrought directly for this purpose, and intended as proofs of the true religion; but there were many other miracles wrought by Elijah at the same time, which, though done upon other occasions, yet were most undoubted proofs of his being a servant of the true God, and that the religion he professad was true. But I must not omit another miracle wrought by this great prophet in foretelling the death o king Ahaziah, when he sent messengers in his sick ness to inquire of "Baal-zebub the God of Ekron

whether he should recover of his disease."* These messengers Elijah met, and, according to the instructions he had received from an angel, told them to go back to their master, and tell him in the name of the Lord, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shall surely die."† And soon after "he died, according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken."‡ Here we see the death inflicted upon him foretold, and happening accordingly, in punishment of his impiety in neglecting the God of his fathers, and sending to enquire about his recovery of an idol; and consequently these also were miracles wrought

in defence of the true religion.

XI. In the reigns of the succeeding kings, as the wickedness of the people of Israel was daily increasing, so we find God Almighty multiplying his miracles among them, particularly by the hands of Elisha, the successor of Elijah, after the latter had been translated. We find also many particular prophecies made on different occasions, with their perfect accomplishment, especially that of the captivity and dispersion of the ten tribes, and the Babylonish captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem, which were expressly foretold as a punishment of the people's idolatry, and their forsaking the true religion; and consequently, when literally fulfilled, were so many convincing proofs of its truth. All these things show how attentive Almighty God was during this period of the kings, to work repeated miracles in defence of his true religion, and consequently how much he judges this an end worthy to be procured by such means. It is needless to multiply more examples in particular, as the above sufficiently evince this truth.

XII. During the time of the Babylonish captivity, religion was, to all appearance, in the utmost danger. The people were dispersed amidst an infidel nation,

were not allowed to be in a body by themselves, were deprived of the public exercise of their religion, and daily exposed to the dangerous example of those heathen nations among whom they dwelt. When we consider the inconceivable proneness which this people had to idolatry while in their own country, with all the helps of their religion, it seems next to a miracle that, in the above circumstances, they were not entirely perverted. But their very captivity itself, and the miseries they suffered in it, was one very powerful means to preserve them; for this was a convincing and experimental proof of the truth of their religion, as being a literal accom plishment of the many prophecies that had been made concerning it. Neither was God wanting in working several particular and most astonishing miracles during this period, which not only confirmed his own people in their religion, but even forced their greatest enemies to acknowledge that their God was the only true God, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: witness the preservation of the three children in the fiery furnace, of Daniel in the lion's den, and his repeated interpretation of dreams, with the full accomplishment of these interretations, of which more by and by.

XIII. From the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the coming of our Saviour, we find the Jewish nation no less firmly attached to their religion than they had been prone, upon all occasions, to forsake it before that time. The repeated and fatal effects they had experienced of their former infidelity, and the numberless things Almighty God had done in proof of his truth, had at last overcome their obstinacy, and attached them most firml, to his service: and therefore we find, during this last period of their nation, that miracles wrought in proof of their religion became less frequent among them. Yet, even during this time, when the kings of Syria made some violent attacks upon religion, and several of the Jews themselves, blinded by their passions, joined the common enemy, and thereby increased the danger, we see Almighty God no less ready than in former ages to

defend his truth, and work miracles for this purpose. The account of this persecution, and of the miracles which Almighty God wrought upon that occasion, is given at large in the books of the Maccabees, to which for brevity's sake, I must refer. From all that we have seen above in this present chapter, I must draw this clear and evident conclusion, that to preserve the true religion by miracles when it is in danger, is no less worthy of Almighty God than to establish it at the beginning by the same means, and that this is the judgment God makes himself of this matter, having never failed, during the whole course of the Mosaic dispensation, actually to work very great and surprising miracles in defence of his religion, whenever it was exposed to any danger.

XIV. Next to the immediate defence of religion itself, there is nothing which Almighty God seems to have more at heart than that his people should preserve a high respect and religious veneration for all persons and things immediately connected with him, or employed in his service. Hence he has always expressed the greatest jealousy for the honour of the sacred character and authority of the priesthood; for the respect due to those his hely servants whom he employed as his ambassadors to men; and for the reverence to be paid to all holy things used in his service, such as his ark, his temple, the sacred vessels, and the like. And indeed it must be owned, that as, where there is a true spirit of religion and piety towards God, this will of necessity show itself in a just respect and veneration for all those sacred persons and things which are so immediately connected with him; so, on the contrary, where this respect and veneration are wanted towards these sacred objects, it is a sure sign that virtue and piety are greatly on the decline, and consequently that religion itself is in no small dan-For this reason Almighty God has judged this also an object worthy of his care to preserve, and has been pleased, through the whole series of the old religion, to work, as occasion required, most extraordinary and surprising miracles, in order to excite and keep up in his

people a high esteem of the sanctity of the priesthood and a just regard and veneration for all holy persons and holy things. And whereas the imprinting these sentiments of respect and veneration in the minds of the people seemed particularly needful at the first establishment of their religion; when their minds were as yet rude and gross and unacquainted with the ways of God, so we find the infinite wisdom and goodness of God particularly lavish, if I may use the expression, at that time in working the most wonderful miracles for that purpose; for, not to mention that all the glorious miracles wrought by Moses contributed exceedingly to imprint in the minds of the people the utmost veneration for his person, which was of the highest consequence at that time, let us only consider some of those which were wrought directly for these ends.

XV. Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, presumed upon a certain occasion to speak against him, and put themselves upon an equal footing with him. But their presumption was immediately checked by a miracle. Almighty God himself appeared in his glory on the tabernacle, reproved them by name for their crime, declared how much more highly favoured Moses was by him than they, and said, "wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, Moses?"* Then departing from them in great wrath, he in an instant smote Miriam with an universal leprosy, from which she was not cured till after seven days, and then at the arnest prayer of Moses.

XVI. Soon after this Korah and his companions full of jealousy and envy against Moses and Aaron, for the high dignity of the priesthood conferred on the latter and his family, rose up against them, accusing them or ambition and usurpation, and seduced a great number of the chiefs of the families to their party, about two hundred and fifty men of whom took upon them to provide censers and offer incense before the Lord. Moses was

exceedingly afflicted at their crime, and dreading the fatal consequences it might draw upon them, exhorts them pressingly to return to their duty, and avert their impending ruin; but seeing their obstinacy, he foretells their destruction, as the most convincing proof of his oeing commissioned by God: "Hereby," says he, "shall you know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me; but if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, and all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."* Scarcely had Moses finished these words, when lo! they are immediately accomplished: "And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clove assunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their tents, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods-and they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation,"† etc. And as for these two hundred and fifty principal men that had presumed to offer incense without being priests, "there came a fire out from the Lord and consumed them." What an extraordinary interposition of the divine power is here displayed to our eyes! What surprising miracles! How fitly adapted to convince that rude and obdurate people of the sanctity of that authority which Moses and Aaron exercised, and to fill their minds with the most profound respect and veneration for the priesthood, which they saw sustained by God himself by so signal and so tremendous a ven geance exercised on those who profaned it! Such, however, was the obduracy of that people, that even these miracles did not thoroughly quiet them; but the

[•] Num. xvi. 28.

more they strive to oppose the sacred authority which God had established among them, the more he contends by miracles to confirm it. The very next morning, when the first impressions of fear and amazement had subsided, the people were greatly afflicted for the death of so many of the chiefs of their families, and looking on Moses and Aaron as the authors of that calamity, a general murmur rose against them throughout the whole congregation. Moses knew well that God would not let this pass unpunished; nay God himself threatened them with utter destruction upon that account, and accordingly a plague began. Moses ordered his brother to go immediately and offer an atonement for the people, which he did, and succeeded: God was appeared—the plague was stopped; but, in the short time it lasted, no less than fourteen thousand of the people were consumed by it. What a dreadful instance of the divine vengeance! what a miraculous interposition of the divine power! how convincing a proof of the divine commission of Moses and the sanctity of the priesthood, seeing that their murmuring against it is immediately punished with a dreadful plague, which, at the prayer of the highpriest, is instantly stayed! But that these things might be fully established, and no more room left to call them in question again, Almighty God condescends to add another miracle to the former, which should be continued to after generations as a standing miracle among that people in proof of the above verities. He orders twelve rods to be provided, one for each of the tribes, with the name of each tribe written upon its rod, and Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi. These were ordered to be laid up in the tabernacle before the ark, and the point in question, namely, whether or not God Almighty had chosen Aaron and his family to be his priests, or if they had usurped that high dignity of themselves, was put to this miraculous proof, as God himself proposed it to Moses beforehand, "The man's rod whom I shall choose shall blossom."* Nothing surely could be

Num. xvii. 5.

thought of more above all the powers of nature, than that a dry rod, without so much as being put into the earth, should, in the short space of one night, send forth leaves and blossoms; and yet, the very next morning, when the rods were examined, "The rod of Aaron was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds!"* Accordingly, this was deemed so convincing a proof that it entirely satisfied the people, and put a stop to their murmurs; and the blossomed rod was ordered by God to be laid up in the ark of the testimony, as a token for all future ages of

the authority and sanctity of the priesthood.

XVII. As we proceed in the history of God's people. we find repeated examples of the same conduct of divine providence. Most surprising miracles of different kinds were performed by God in testimony of the sanctity of the priesthood and of holy things, and in order to create in the hearts of the people a high esteem and veneration for them. When under the command of Joshua they arrived at the river Jordan, which was the boundary of Canaan, the land of promise, it happened to be in the harvest time, when that river was greatly swelled and overflowed all its banks, so that there was no possibility for the people to pass through it. Almighty God was pleased to take this opportunity of working new miracles in favour of his people; in which he had several ends in view, as related in Josue, chap. iii. iv. One was to convince the people still more and more of the divine favour and protection, and consequently to increase their love and confidence in God. Thus Joshua said to the people, foretelling the miracle that was to be wrought in their favour, "hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out the Canaanites." + Another end was to gain credit and authority to Joshua from the people, to convince them that God was with him, and consequently to engage them to a perfect submission and obedience to

^{*} Num. xvii. 8. — † Jos. iii. 10. See also chap. iv. v. 24.

him. Thus Almighty God himself says to him, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."* Now the wonderful miracle which was wrought for this purpose, Joshua foretells the people in these words, "Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan—and it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles o the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan. that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above, and they shall stand upon an heap."† And this was literally performed, as is related at large in the following verses, the waters below running down, and those above standing firm in a heap, leaving a passage for the whole people through the channel of the river on dry ground; "And the priests that bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people passed clean over Jordan." But when all were passed over, the priests were then ordered to come out of the river; "And it came to pass when the priests that hore the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned into their place, and flowed over all its banks as they did before." Now, in this wonderful miracle, which was a renewal of what had been done in the preceding generation by dividing the Red sea, | besides the two ends to be gained by it mentioned above what respect, esteem and veneration must it have ex cited in the hearts of the people towards the priests and he ark of the covenant, who were the immediate instru ments by which this miracle was performed, and to whom in a particular manner it is attributed? "As soon," says Joshua, "as the soles of the feet of the

^{*} Jos. iii. 7. See also chap. iv. ver. 14. † ibid. v. 17. See also chap. iv. ver. 14.

[|] Ibid. iv. 23.

priests that bear the ark shall rest in the waters—the waters shall be cut off," which was accordingly done; and as long as they stood in Jordan, the division of the water continued; and the moment their feet was out of Jordan, its waters returned to their place as before. Could any thing serve more to exalt them in the sight of the people? could any thing more effectually convince that people of the sanctity of the priesthood, and

of the respect due to the ark?

XVIII. To create and keep up this respect for holy things, Almighty God had prohibited all but the priests. even the Levites themselves, from touching the ark, or looking into the Holy of Holies. Thus, when the different offices were appointed for the families of the Levites, and the sons of Kohath were ordered to be the bearers of the sanctuary, and the altars, and the holy vessels, and other instruments used at the altar, the priests, the sons of Aaron, were expressly commanded to cover up all these things, before the others came to carry them, who were forbidden under pain of death to touch them, or even so much as to see them uncovered. Thus, after having given orders to the priests in what manner every thing was to be covered up, the scripture says, "after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it, but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die."* And a little after, "but they (viz. the sons of Kohath) shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die."† Now, as this law was evidently made on purpose to excite in the hearts of the people a just respect and veneration towards all holy things. belonging to the service of God, so we find that in after ages those who transgressed this law, and failed in the due respect which it prescribed towards those holy things, were most severely and often miraculously punished for so doing. Besides what happened to the Philistines while the ark of God was in their possession. as above related, when they sent it back to the Israe.

^{*} Num. iv. 15.

ites, its first arrival was among the Bethsamites; these were filled with great joy on seeing the ark return again; but amidst their joy upon that occasion, had the curiosity and presumption to open it and look into it. Thi crime was so displeasing to God, that he immediately "smote them with a very great slaughter to no less a number than fifty thousand, three-score and ten men."* in like manner, when David was bringing up the ark to ine place which he had prepared for it, in a great procession, and with very great solemnity, the oxen which drew the carriage on which the ark was placed became unruly, and kicked so that it was in danger of being overthrown. Upon this Uzzah, one of those who drove the carriage, " put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his errour, and there he died by the ark of God." † What an impression must this have made in the hearts of all that people! what an idea must it have given them of the sanctity of God and of every thing belonging to his service! what sentiments of reverence and veneration must it have excited in their minds towards these holy things! David himself was so deeply affected with fear and dread on this awful occasion, that he durst not venture to take the ark to himself, as he had proposed, seeing the great respect which God required to be paid towards it.

Another miraculous instance of the like nature, in vindication of the respect due to holy things against those who profane them, we have in Balshazzar, king of Babylon, who in the midst of his banquet, ordered the holy vessels, which his father had carried away from the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his concubines and nobles might drink out of them. This profanation of the holy vessels did not pass long unpunished. A man's hand appears to the king, writing upon the wall over against him; he is immediately seized with an excessive fear at this miraculous sight; Daniel

the prophet is called in to read and explain the writing. and he assures the king that his ruin is at hand in punishment of his sacrilege; and that this miraculous handwriting was sent by God to foretell his impending destruction on that account. That very night the prediction was fully accomplished.* From these examples and other such recorded in the scriptures, we clearly see how much Almighty God esteems the exciting and preserving in the hearts of his people a respect and veneration for the priesthood, and for all holy things, to be an end worthy to be attained even by miraculous exertions of his almighty power. But of this we shall have occasion to say more when we come to consider the instruments used by God in performing miracles; and shall here only add a few examples of miracles wrought to convince mankind of the sanctity of holy people, who were not priests, and to procure credit and authority for them and for their words with the people, when God Almighty is pleased to commission them to declare his will to others. We have seen this in part already, both with regard to Moses and Joshua. have another most amazing instance of it with regard to the latter, when after gaining a great victory over the combined army of five kings, Almighty God not only assisted his people in a miraculous manner to discomfit their enemies, "by casting down great stones from heaven upon them" to destroy them, but also, as the day was far spent, and time failed the Israelites for the pursuit, Joshua, full of perfect confidence, "spoke to the Lord-and said in the sight of Israel, sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies—so the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that, before it nor after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." † Wha:

idea, what respect and veneration must that people have had for a man, at whose desire the great God was pleased to stop the general course of nature, and suspend for a whole day the laws of the universe! what opinion must they have had of his sanctity and interest with God, who was pleased, in a manner so amazing, to hearken to his voice?

XIX. Again, when the people of Israel became tired of being governed by judges, and demanded a king to reign over them, the holy prophet Samuel was exceedingly afflicted, and looked upon their demand as throwing off God himself, and a withdrawing themselves from his authority; however, being instructed by God concerning this matter, he provided them a king of God's own choosing, and the day this king was presented to them, (before Samuel gave up his own charge entirely,) he expostulates with them upon their ingratitude towards God, shows his infinite goodness in condescending to their desire, and providing a king for them, and then promises on the part of Gcd, that notwithstanding this their sin in seeking a king, yet if they will only in future "fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice," all would yet be well with them; but "if they did not obey his voice, but rebelled against his commandment, that then the hand of the Lord would be against them, as it had been against their fathers." And immediately, to confirm his words, and convince the people of the greatness of their crime, and that what he had said was really from God himself, he works a most extraordinary miracle, which he even foretells befc e hand. "Is it not wheat harvest," says he, "to-day !" (tl. t is a clear fine harvest day;) "I will call upon the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain, that we may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ve have done in the sight of the Lord in asking you a king; so Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel; and all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God

that we die not,"* etc. Here we see this most extraordinary miracle performed on purpose to convince the people of what the prophet told them, which it not only did most effectually, but also increased their veneration and respect for the holy servant of God, and convinced them of his power and interest with God, so that they greatly feared him, and earnestly recommended them

selves to his prayers.

XX. In like manner, when King Ahaziah in his sickness sent messengers to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron to inquire if he would recover his health, Elijah meeting the messengers by the way, sent them back to tell the king he would surely die of that distemper, because forsaking the God of Israel he had sent to inquire of an idol; upon which the king sent a captain and fifty men to bring the prophet prisoner to him. When the captain with his men approached the prophet, he accosted him with an air of authority, "thou man of God, the king hath said, come down;" to which the prophet immediately replied, "if I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty; and immediately there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty." † Upon this the king sent another captain with his company upon the same errand, and the same thing befel him also. Here then a very great miracle is performed; at the voice of a man, fire comes down from heaven in an instant, once and again, and destroys and hundred people expressly to prove the sanctity of Elias, and that he truly was a man of God. In the same manner, when he raised the widow's son from the dead, and delivered him safe into his mother's hands, the natural and immediate effect it produced on her mind, was, to convince her of the sanctity of the prophet; for, receiving her son alive from his hand, in a transport of joy and admiration she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true."+

XXI. Again, when Elisha, who accompanied his master Elijah at the time he was taken up to heaven, arrived at Jordan, (having the mantle of Elijah in his possession, which he had dropped at parting with him,) in order to get a passage through the river, "he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, where is the God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither, and he also went over."* Nothing could give this prophet a greater idea of the sanctity of his master, than to see that the elements were obedient to himself by even touching them with the mantle that had once belonged to him, and calling upon God for his sake This last miracle no less effectually convinced the sons of the prophets, who were spectators of it, that Elisha himself was a holy servant of God, and succeeded as prophet in room of his master who was gone; for, "when the sons of the prophets, who were to view at Jericho, saw him, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha,' and they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."† It were endless to mention every example of this kind; the above are more than sufficient to show what is here intended. And indeed, the convincing mankind of the sanctity of God's holy servants, and procuring credit and respect for them, is a natural consequence that may be expected from all miracles wrought by them; but the above examples clearly show, that it is one of those ends which Almighty God sometimes directly intends from them.

XXII. Another end which we find the divine wisdom had in view by working miracles was, to convince idolaters that he was the only true God of all the earth, when at any time he wanted to make known and propagate his true religion among them, or to punish them for their impieties and blasphemies against it. Thus, when Naaman the Syrian was so miraculously cured of his leprosy by washing himself seven times in Jordan, as the

prophet Elisha had desired him, "he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him, and he said, behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."* We see here the happy effect which this miracle had, and which therefore was surely intended by the great God that wrought it, in convincing Naaman of the falsity of the superstition in which he had been brought up, and bringing him to the knowledge and service of the only true God. On the other hand, the glorious deliverance of good king Hezekiah from the impious Sennacherib, was foretold and executed in a most miraculous manner, on purpose to punish that prince for his haughtiness and impious blasphemies against the true God, and to convince him and all his host that the God of Israel, whom he had blasphemed, was the sovereign Lord of all the earth, and all the power and strength he had in his numerous armies was wholly in the hands of this Supreme Being, and a mere nothing before him.+

XXIII. It is commonly observed as a most admirable instance of the divine providence, and of God's wonderful manner of disposing all things for his wise and beneficent ends, that whilst, by the dispersion of the tentribes, and the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, he justly punished his people for their repeated crimes, and frequent rebellions against him, he, at the same time, made use of this as a most proper means to bring those other nations acquainted with him and with his religion, and with the sacred books, and thus dispose them for the more effectually receiving, in process of time, the Redeemer and his doctrine, when he should afterwards be sent among mankind. To do this the more effectually, we find he was not wanting in working most signal miracles during the Babylonish captivity, which extorted, even from his most inveterate enemies, a noble confession of his almighty power, and that he was the only King and sovereign Lord of all the earth. The impious

^{* 2} Kings v. 10.

[†] Sec the whole history, 2 Kings xvii. xix., and Isaiah xxxvi. xxxvii.

and haughty Nebuchadnezzar, seeing the firm resolution of the three holy young men in refusing to comply with his idolatry, and worship the golden statue that he had set up, was filled with indignation against them, and expressed his pride and arrogance in this blasphemous manner, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" But when afterwards he saw them walking unhurt in the midst of the fiery furnace, con founded and amazed he called them out, acknowledged them for servants of the most high God, and broke out into this just attestation of his divinity, "Blessed be the od of Shadrach, Mesach, and Abed-nego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him, —Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Mesach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dung-hill, BECAUSE THERE IS NO OTHER GOD THAT CAN DELIVER AFTER THIS SORT."* Again, when the prophet Daniel had discovered to the king his dream, which he had quite forgotten, and which none of the wise men among the Chaldeans could find out; and when he showed him also the meaning and interpretation of it, the king was so amazed at the greatness of this miracle, which so convincingly demonstrated that the God of Daniel was the true God, and that Daniel was in the highest favour with him that "he fell on his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours to him; and the king answered unto Daniel and said, of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal t is secret."+ Another example to the same purpose we have in the preservation of Daniel in the lion's den, which made such an impression on Darius, another heathen and idolatrous prince, that he wrote to all his subjects as follows: "Peace be multiplied unto you: I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, mer

^{*} See Daniel iii. 28, 29.

tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."*

These examples need no application.

XXIV. I shall now briefly sum up the conclusions that necessarily result from all that we have seen in this and the preceding chapter, that it may appear at once in a more clear and distinct point of view. We find, then, from undoubted facts related in the sacred word of God itself, that God has been pleased to work numbers of great and astonishing miracles at different times and in different places, for the following purposes:-First, For convincing mankind that the doctrine he revealed to them by those who wrought these miracles in his name, was truly his doctrine, and thereby to engage them the more readily to receive, and the more steadfastly to embrace it. Secondly, For defending his revelation once made, and preserving the religion he had given his people, from all attempts in after ages to corrupt or destroy it. Thirdly, For asserting his own honour against all false gods, and their idolatrous worship. Fourthly, For engaging his people to believe and trust in him, to love him, to obey him, and to serve him only, and thus to promote the sanctification and perfection of their ouls. Fifthly, To assert and vindicate the sanctity of his priesthood, and of all those holy things made use of in his immediate worship, and to procure due respect and veneration to be paid to them. Sixthly, To show the anctity of those holy people whom he sends from time to time into the world, as his messengers among men and to gain due respect and credit to them, that by their words and examples others may be stirred up to greater piety and fervour. Seventhly, To convince idolaters and those who knew him not, that he is the only true God,

when at any time he is pleased to communicate the knowledge of himself and of his holy will to them. And from all this we draw this obvious and natural conclusion: "That since Almighty God has been pleased to work the most stupendous miracles for gaining these ends, it was most worthy of him to do so; and as it was so then, it is no less so now, and at all times, whenever the like ends may require it."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE PARTICULAR ENDS OF MIRACLES, KNOWN FROM REVELATION.

I. When we consider the importance of the miracles related in the two preceding chapters, wherein the glory of the Supreme Being, and the sanctification and happiness of whole nations, were so nearly concerned, we are not surprised that a God of infinite goodness should condescend to exert his Almighty power in working miracles, when ends so worthy of himself are to be obtained by them; but it may appear somewhat wonderful, indeed, if we find that this same great God has been no less liberal in performing the most amazing miracles, even when the sanctification and happiness of particular persons only were immediately intended to be obtained by their means. And, indeed, it is from this head of the supposed disproportion between the end proposed and the miracle performed, as if the former were not worth the expense of the latter, that Freethinkers draw great part of their sneers and objections against the existence of particular miracles. Their mistake arises from their ignorance of, or inattention to three very important truths, and evidently shows how superficial they are in their inquiries about these matters,

notwithstanding the air of authority and self-sufficiency with which they dogmatize concerning them. These truths I shall here display, as they serve for so man principles which very much illustrate this subject of th Ends of Miracles, and at once obviate all objection against their existence, drawn from the pretended insig

nificancy of these ends.

II. First, The intrinsic value of one single soul i greatly superior, and much more esteemed by Almighty God, than all the inanimate creation together. This is a truth which we have seen above, in a great measure. proved by the help of natural reason; but it is revelation only which can set it in its proper light; as he who made the soul, and therefore perfectly well knows its real value, is the only one who can discover that value to us, and give us a just and proper idea of it. And indeed it must be owned, that the idea which Almighty God gives us in his holy scriptures of the high value and intrinsic worth of an immortal soul, is exceedingly sublime and noble. He assures us, in the first place, that, with regard to ourselves and our own interest, the whole world is not equal, nor comparable to one soul. "What will it profit a man," says Jesus Christ, "to gain THE WHOLE WORLD and lose his own soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul!"* world is but a momentary shadow, which must end with time, but the soul will subsist for ever and ever! and consequently, there is as great a difference between the value of the whole world and that of a soul, as there is between time and eternity. Secondly, The scripture informs us, that the devil himself, who is termed in holy writ "this god of this world, and the ruler of the powers of darkness," puts such an immense value upon souls, that his continual employment is to go about like a roaring lion seeking to get them to himself, and that he is willing to give all the treasures of this world for a single act of worship from one soul. When our blessed

Saviour was pleased to submit to the humiliation of being tempted by Satan, after other means had failed him, that wicked spirit at last takes him up to an exceedingly high mountain, and there "shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; and the devil said unto him, all this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for unto me, they are delivered and to whomsoever I will I give them; if thou therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine."* What an ide does this give us of the high value and worth of a soul above all the material world, when we see this wicked spirit, who surely knows the value of both, give so great a preference to the former? But even this is little, or rather nothing at all, when compared to the esteem which Almighty God himself has shown for the soul of man, in sending his only son, equal to himself in nature, to redeem man from misery, at no less a price than the last drop of his precious blood, spilt in the midst of the most dreadful torments! When we consider the infinite dignity of person of Jesus Christ, his perfect innocence and sanctity, and the inestimable value of his precious life, it cannot fail to give us the most exalted idea of the value and worth of the human soul; when we see that glorious Being debasing his dignity by the most abject humiliations, concealing his sanctity and innocence under the outward appearance of a sinner, and laying down his precious life, in the midst of torments, for no other end but to save our souls, and redeem us from that interminable misery which we had deserved for our sins. What shall I say of that anxiety and solicitude which Almighty God every where expresses throughout his holy scriptures for our happiness? his pressing concern for our good? his ardent desire for our salvation? all which are most endearing proofs of the high value and esteem which he sets upon the soul of man. † If, there-

^{*} Luke iv.

[†] The following beautiful lines of Dr. Young, in his Night Thoughts are very much to our purpose here:

Know'st thou th' importance of a soul immortal? Behold this midnight glory, worlds on worlds!

fore, in the judgment of Jesus Christ himself, the whole world is not to be compared to one soul, can we be surprised that Almighty God should cause any change or alteration in the ordinary course of the inferior creation, when the perfection and happiness of so valuable a being as a soul is, can by that means be promoted? If he sets so high a value on the soul of man as to lay down his own most precious life to redeem him, can we wonder that he should suspend for a time the laws by whichinanimate matter is guided, or cause any unusual change or alteration in it, in order to secure the salvation of a soul which cost him so dear? To bring about this great end of the redemption of mankind, "he spoke much, and did more, and suffered most of all." as a certain holy man observes; but to perform the most stupendous miracle, he has only to will it, and immediately his will is obeyed: if, then, he has actually done the greater to gain souls, can we be surprised he should do the less? And is it not most worthy of him to do what costs him only a word in order to secure an end for which he has already done and suffered so much, even a cruel and ignominious death? If Deists and Freethinkers would consider these things attentively, instead of ridiculing miracles, because they, forsooth, can see no great and general good end procured by them, they would easily be convinced that it is most worthy and highly becoming the majesty of God to perform even the most astonishing miracles,-to suspend the whole order, and all the laws of nature, when the perfection or happiness of one single soul can be the better secured by so doing.

Thirdly, Another great cause of their mistaken judgment in this matter is their ignorance of, or not adverting to, two different ends which the divine wisdom has in view in working miracles, namely, the general or

Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thousand add; add twice ten thousand more;
Then weigh the whole; one soul outweighs them all,
And calls th' astonishing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor.

Complaint, Night VII.

universal ends which are common to all miracles, and the particular and inferior ends which are different in different miracles. The general and universal ends which God has ultimately and principally in view of every miracle, and indeed in all his works, are, as we have seen above, first, his own glory, and then the salvation of souls. The former of these is always the constant and unavoidable consequence of a true miracle, because every true miracle necessarily manifests to the world the power, wisdom, goodness, or justice of God; it also conduces to, and promotes the perfection and salvation of souls, by exciting in the hearts of all those who see it, or afterwards come to the knowledge of it, those holy sentiments of gratitude, and love, and confidence in the divine goodness, or a salutary fear of his judgments. The particular and inferior ends of miracles, are those good and wholesome effects which are more immediately intended, and directly produced by them, either for the benefit or punishment of those concerned, which are different on different occasions, but always conducive to the above general ends. and subservient thereto; such as the bestowing temporal favours, or the inflicting temporal evils in a miraculous manner The former naturally and powerfully excite the most grateful sentiments of love, confidence, praise, and thanksgiving towards the kind and paternal hand that bestows them, in the hearts both of those who see or know of such miracles, and of those who reap the gracious and beneficent effects of them; and the latter no less powerfully tend to rouse sinners from their lethargy, and move them to repentance, and to fill all those who see or hear of them with a salutary fear of the divine justice, and a dread of offending their great Creator. Now, should any miracle be performed in behalf of a single person only, and seem directly to tend to his good alone, yet, if this happens to be known to others, it becomes a more general good, and, if published to the world, becomes an universal benefit, capable of producing the best effects, by manifesting the ry of Gou, and promoting the good of souls, even to

the latest posterity; witness all the miracles of this kind recorded either in holy writ, or in the genuine lives of the saints, which it is impossible to read, with a faithful heart, without being moved to sentiments of piety and devotion. Here, then, lies another great source of the mistaken judgments and false reasoning of Deists upon this subject, their not attending to the different ends for which miracles are performed, and especially to those general and most valuable ends which are necessarily found in all true miracles, to wit, the display ing, in a most sensible and affecting manner, the perfections and glory of the Supreme Being, and thereby efficaciously promoting the perfection of the soul of Instead of taking this view of the subject they are perpetually grovelling about the immediate sensible effects produced by miracles; and because they do not always find in them some remarkably great end relating to present happiness, they persuade themselves that what they see is unworthy of God,—below the dignity of the divine majesty,-by no means deserving the interposition of a miracle, and therefore a just foundation for them to ridicule the miracle itself, and explode it as an imposture. The falsity of such reasoning is manifest from what is said above, and will appear still more when we come to the facts themselves.

Fourthly, Another great source of their mistake lies in confounding the light in which the Supreme Being views miracles, with the ideas and opinions which they themselves, and indeed mankind in general, have of them. Miracles in the eyes of man are something exceedingly great and wonderful—the effects of a power quite inconceivable to us—and they naturally fill our minds not only with wonder and amazement, but also either with joy and pleasure, or with fear and terror, according to the nature of the effect produced by them in regard to ourselves or others. Hence, in relation to our notions, a miracle is a laborious work, requiring of force quite superior to any thing we know; and the more uncommon or extraordinary the thing done is in

our eyes, the greater effort of strength it seems to us to require: From this we distinguish greater and smaller miracles, according as they seem to require a greater or smaller exertion of power to effectuate them. But can any reasonable person allow himself to think that they appear in this light to Almighty God? Such a thought would be most unreasonable. With regard to Goa, there is not the smallest distinction between the miracle greatest in our eyes and the smallest; between annihilating a mite and annihilating the universe; between creating a grain of sand and creating a world The one is as easy to him as the other; the sole act of his will equally suffices to perform them both. Nor is there any thing wonderful to him at all, because he perfectly well knows all that possibly can be done in creatures, and sees every thing that actually will be done in them to all eternity; hence nothing can possibly be new to him, nothing wonderful, nothing miraculous in his eyes; "the works of all flesh are before him," says the wise man, "and there is nothing hidden from his eyes; he sees from eternity to eternity, and nothing is wonderful in his sight."* Now, this great truth, infidels seem entirely to forget, and argue as if they imagined that miracles made the same impression upon God that they do on man; that what we call a greater miracle costs him more than a small one; that, therefore, the one is more precious in his eyes than the other, and requires a proportionably more valuable end to be acquired, before he can be induced to perform it. And from these notions, which I do not suppose them capable of entertaining expressly, but which seem to lurk in their minds, and influence their judgments; -from these, I say, they conclude, that when they hear of any miracle, but do not perceive any immediate end, which, according to their views, seems proportionate to it, the miracle must certainly be false, and immediately they cry out with a sneer, "Pugh! to what purpose so great an expense of

^{*} Eccles. xxxix 24, 25.

miracle? Will the all-wise God be at such pains for nothing? Where is there any end here equal or proportionable to the thing done? For shame, to give credit to such unlikely tales as these!" And upon these solid arguments, without more ado, they resolve the whole into priest-craft and imposture. The injudicious folly of such reasoning is clearly manifest, both from. the principles on which it is founded when examined explicitly, and from the many express facts declared in holy scripture, which I shall now proceed to relate. will be seen that Almighty God forms a very different judgment from these gentlemen in this matter, and has actually been pleased to perform great numbers of miracles for the benefit even of particular persons, and where the immediate end directly intended would seem, according to modern ideas, to be but of very little importance; but which, like others of the same kind, very much conduced to promote the great end of all miracles, and continue to this day to display the infinite goodness or justice of God, and to fill the hearts of all sincere Christians with the most amiable affections towards their great Creator. Now that we may, as much as possible, observe distinction and order in relating the miracles from scripture which fall under our present subject, we must divide them into different classes, according to the nature of the particular ends immediately and directly intended by them.

III. The first class contains all those cases where Almighty God communicating any truth, or giving any commission, or making any promise to any of his servants, was pleased to convince them by miracles, that these things were from him and not a delusion. We have seen above how he behaved in this respect to Moses, when he appeared to him in the wilderness in the burning bush, and gave him the commission of delivering his people out of Egypt. He was pleased to perform some very extraordinary miracles upon this occasion, by turning Moses' rod into a serpent, and making his hand leprous, and then restoring both as

they were before, for no other immediate end than to convince Moses that it was God himself who was giving him this commission, and to impart to him such confidence in the divine protection as would enable him to perform it with success; which effects they produced

accordingly.

IV. We have another beautiful example of this in the call of Gideon to be the deliverer of the people of God from the tyranny of the Midianites. After the angel had discoursed some time with him, and told him, that he should "save Israel from the hands of the Midianites," and for this purpose encouraged him by the promise of his protection, saying, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shall smite the Midianites as one man;" Gideon, dubious if this were really a messenger from heaven, asked a sign to convince him. "If now," says he, "I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me." Then going into the house, he made ready the flesh of a kid, and brought it out, with some unleavened cakes and a measure of flour. and a pot full of broth, and presented the whole to the angel; the angel desired him to lay the whole upon the hard rock, and "pour out the broth, and he did so; then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight."* We see here a very great miracle, a flame of fire brought out of the hard rock in an instant by the touch of the angel's staff, and consuming all the offering, for no other immediate end but to give satisfaction to a single person, and to convince him that the commission he had received was from God himself. Were we to rest here only, our modern infidels might descant a great deal upon this fact, by vilifying the end obtained, by observing that the miracle was quite needless,—that the end could have

been obtained as well without it, as was done by several of the other judges, whom God raised up about this time to deliver his people, and encouraged them to undertake that work by the ordinary impressions he made in their minds without any miracle at all, etc. No doubt God Almighty could have done this also in Gideon without a miracle, nor was he any wise obliged to do it by miracle; but here is a certain fact which shows he does not think it unworthy of himself to condescend to the desires of his servants, and to work miracles with a view to give satisfaction even to a single person, and convince him that it is He himself who is speaking with him. But we ought not to rest at this immediate end alone, but consider what impressions this miracle made in Gideon's mind,—how it discovered to him the infinite goodness and condescension of Almighty God, -how it filled him with a fear of his divine majesty, and with what superior confidence and courage it inspired him to undertake the great work to which God had called him. glorious ends, worthy of the Almighty to procure by repeated miracles if necessary; and, in fact, we find he did perform repeated miracles on this very occasion, the more effectually to procure them; for when Gideon some time after had gathered together his army to fight for his people, being desirous of further assurance from heaven, he said unto God; "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, behold I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so; for he rose up early in the morning, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew: And God did so that night; for it was dry upon

the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."* What a field for sneers and ridicule, according to the reasoning of these times, is here! How unworthy, would our modern Deists say, of the Almighty to be employed in such trifles! How far below the majesty of God to alter the ordinary course established in nature in order to gratify the idle desires of a person who ought rather to have been punished for his incredulity after what he had already seen! "I believe too much in God," says Rousseau, "to credit so many miracles so little worthy of his nature." But a pious soul would draw a quite contrary conclusion, and would read, in these facts, the infinite goodness and condescension of God,—his paternal indulgence towards his servants. his high esteem and value for any one soul, which he is ready to gratify even by working repeated miracles, if required or necessary; and from these considerations he would be filled with the most tender sentiments of praise, thanksgiving, confidence, love, gratitude, and the like, towards such infinite goodness. And there is no reason to doubt but this was the effect produced in the mind of Gideon, and this effect it continues to produce to this day in the minds of all those pious souls, who, firmly believing all the sacred truths revealed by God, read his divine scriptures with humility and devotion. We have another example pretty similar to this in the behaviour of the angel that appeared to the parents of Samson and foretold his birth, though his mother had been till that time barren; for when they were offeringsacrifice to the Lord, "the angel did wondrously before them, and ascended up in the flame of the altar," to convince them he was a messenger from God, and that what he had said was true.

V. The miracle which was performed by Isaiah the prophet before king Hezekiah, deserves a particular-place here. This good king had fallen sick and was threatened with death, but, upon his tears and prayers

^{*} Judges vi.

to God, God was pleased to restore him to health and, add fifteen years more to his life. He sent the prophet Isaiah to tell him so; and that in three days he should be so well as to be able to go to the house of God; but Hezekiah, anxious to have a proof of the truth of this prophecy, "said unto Isaiah, what shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day? And Isaiah said, this sign shalt thou have of the Lord that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken, shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? and Hezekiah answered, it is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees, nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Achaz." What a stupendous miracle are we presented with in this passage! The ordinary course of nature suspended! The diurnal† motion of the heavens not only retarded or stopped, (as was done when at Joshua's command the sun stood still,) but absolutely reverted, and a motion diametrically opposite impressed upon them! And all this for what end?—to satisfy a single person of the certainty of an event, which in the short space of three days he would have seen verified by the fact itself.— Human reason is here lost in amazement, and infidelity would laugh at this relation, and reject it with disdain, from the palpable absurdity it seems to carry in its very bosom. "Can reason ever believe," will the deist say, "that the supreme Being has nothing else to do but attend to the idle curiosity of such worms as we are? to gratify every foolish desire of man? much less to work miracles for such an end? But to suspend the universal laws of the whole creation, to alter the course of the heavens, to undo in a manner his own work, for gratify-

* 2 Kings xx.

[†] The intelligent reader will easily perceive, that I express myself here in the scripture style, which on this subject accommodates itself to the appearances these things make on the eyes of the beholders.

ing the idle impatience of a single person, which the short space of three days would have satisfied in the natural course of things, without any miracle at all; how ridiculous to believe such a tale so unworthy of God! What proportion is there between the superlative greatness of the miracle here said to be wrought and the end gained by it?-Does the Almighty do anything without some end worthy of himself, and worthy of the means he uses? And do we see any such end here," etc. Such are the impious arguments which are daily used in similar cases not only by Deists, but sometimes even by such as call themselves Christians. It is indeed curious enough to observe their unreasonable conduct. If the miracle recorded be in their eyes small or trifling in itself, they reject it upon this very account, "it is unworthy of God" say they, "to be employed in such trifles." If the miracle be great and stupendous, and which evidently none but God can perform, they say, "It is ridiculous to suppose that God would do such things without some great end proportioned to the greatness of the means he uses."—It is easy, however, to see the cause of their mistake from the principles laid down in the beginning of this chapter; for, with regard to the end, they consider only the immediate secondary effect directly produced—which we may easily allow is not always proportioned to the working of a miracle; -but they do not reflect how much the miracle wrought for such an immediate end tends farther to manifest the divine perfections, and his esteem and love for the soul of man, and to excite in the hearts of those who see it the most excellent and amiable affections towards such infinite goodness. And these, which are the natural consequences of all miracles, are ends, which, as we have seen above, are worthy of any miracle God can work in the material creation, whether great or small. Now, who can doubt but these ends were exceedingly promoted by that most stupendous miracle above related? Nay, who is there to this day that reads the account given us of it in the holy scripture with a faithful and pious heart, and does not feel himself penetrated with the most ardent affections of admiration, reverence, piety, and love? For these effects were not confined to Hezekiah and Isaiah alone, or any others then present when the miracle was performed, but the fact being recorded in holy writ, its effects have continued to be produced by it to this day, and will never cease to be produced by it in innumerable souls as long as the world endureth. Now, will infidels say that these are not effects worthy of God, to be procured even by the greatest miracle? Again, with regard to the thing done, their mistake lies in this, that they do not consider that, whether the miracle be great or small, stupendous or less amazing, it is all the same to God,—the one is as easy to him as the other. He needs only to will, and what he wills is immediately performed; but the more extraordinary the miracle is, the more effectually does it promote the great and ultimate ends of all miracles,—the glory of God and the good of souls.—I might mention here more examples belonging to this class,—such as Zacharias being struck dumb,—as a proof of the truth of what the angel Gabriel declared to him concerning the birth of his son St. John the Baptist, and other such; but what is said above is fully sufficient for our purpose.

VI. In the second class, I shall relate those cases wherein we find Almighty God condescending to work miracles in favour of particular persons as a reward of their virtues, particularly their acts of charity, their considence in his goodness, and constancy in his service. When Elijah the prophet was forced to leave his retreat in the wilderness, Almighty God ordered him to go to Zarephath, where he had designed a widow woman to provide food for him. This poor woman was reduced to a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse, between her son and herself, by the long continuance of the famine, and was just going to gather a few sticks for fire to make the last cake for herself and son, and then give themselves up to death, when the prophet met her, and

desired her to bring him a little water, and bake a cake first for him, and then for herself and son. Considering the condition she was in, this was surely a very hard demand and a severe trial of her charity. It is true, indeed, when the prophet asked this of her, he at the same time foretold · her in the name of God, that "her meal should not waste, nor her oil fail, till such time as the Lord sent rain upon the earth;" but he was a stranger to her, nay, she was. a heathen woman of Sidon, not belonging to the people of Israel; she did not know him then to be a prophet, and any impostor might have said the same thing to gain his end. Nevertheless, the poor woman seeing him a stranger, and in distress, did as he desired, and first made a cake for him. In reward of her charity, God Almighty wrought that great miracle of multiplying her handful of meal and her cruse of oil to such a degree, "that she and he (Elijah,) and her house did eat many days, and that the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah."* Here we have a most amazing miracle performed by Almighty God, the immediate and direct end of which was the rewarding an act of charity, and the supplying the wants of his prophet who trusted in him. I do not know whether our modern free-thinkers would, in their great wisdom, deem this an end worthy of so great a miracle, but we see Almighty God did so, and performed it for this very purpose.-But if they should chance to differ in opinion upon this point from the God that made them, let them not be so rash as to reject the belief of the miracle upon this ground, that they see no worthy end to be gained by it; for they should reflect that the end above mentioned, which they judge unworthy, was only the immediate inferior and particular end; but that the ultimate end of all miracles,—the manifesting the glory of God, and the procuring the perfection of souls,-was most admirably promoted by this signal miracle. Consider only

what an effect it must have had in the heart of the prophet himself, and of the poor widow, and of all her family, and bear in mind that the advancing the perfection of one soul is an object worthy of the highest miracle. Neither were these valuable effects of it confined to that family alone. By recording it in holy writ it continues to produce the same in all believers, and presents a most admirable incentive to the practice of those holy virtues of hospitality and charity, so amiable in the eyes of God, and so profitable to those who practise them. But the goodness of God did not stop here. It happened, some time after, that the widow's son took sick and died, and the poor afflicted mother had recourse to the prophet in her distress. He, full of compassion and gratitude, carried the dead child up to the loft, where he lay, and prayed to God to restore the child to life; and observe the argument he used to induce God to grant his petition. "O Lord God," says he, "hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son?"—Mark the words—" with whom I sojourn," the person who has been so hospitable, so charitable to me. This was so strong a motive to influence the bowels of mercy of our God to yield to his request, that upon the prophet's praying that his soul might return again, "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came unto him again, and he revived—and he delivered him alive unto his mother."* This also shows beyond reply, that Almighty God esteems it worthy of himself to perform the greatest mi acles as a reward for the virtues and charitable actions of his servants.

VII. Another beautiful example of this we have in what the prophet Elisha did for the Shunamite woman, his generous hostess. This good woman, seeing the prophet often pass by that way, "constrained him to turn into her house, and eat bread;" and conceiving a great opinion of him as a man of God, "she said unto

^{* 1} Kings xvii.

her husband, behold now I perceive that this is a holy man of God that passes by us continually; let us make a little chamber I pray thee on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither."* This is the description the - scripture gives us of the hospitality and charity of this good woman, and of her regard for those whom she believed to be servants of God. The prophet was not insensible of her kindness, and desiring to show himself grateful, called upon her to ask what he could do for her in return for the attention she had shown to him; and understanding by his servant, that though she was a woman of condition, and well to live, yet she had no child, and her husband was an old man, he immediately prophesied to her that within a year she should have a son, which was fulfilled accordingly, "for the woman conceived and bore a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her," and thus the blessing, which of all others her heart most desired, was bestowed upon her in a most miraculous manner, in reward of her hospitality and charity to God's servant. Neither did the goodness of God rest here in his liberality towards her; this very child being grown up was taken sick and died, and at the prayers of the prophet was miraculously restored to life again, as in the case above mentioned; a still farther confirmation of how agreeable her conduct was to Almighty God, and how ready he is to reward acts of charity and mercy, when done for his sake and to his servants. Yea, still more; when God Almighty - had resolved to send a dreadful famine upon the land, which was to last for seven years, Elisha foretold it to his benefactress, advising her to leave her country during that time, in order to avoid that misery, which she did accordingly; and after seven years were passed, and plenty restored to the land, the goodness of God order ed matters so, that, Elisha being then dead, his servant

^{* 2} Kings iv.

was relating to the king the wonderful doings of his master, and especially the raising this woman's son from the dead, at the very instant of time when the woman and her son, being returned to their own country, presented themselves to the king to petition that their lands might be restored to them again, which, it seems, had been seized upon in their absence; "And Gehazi said, my Lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life." This providential concurrence of favourable circumstances had such an effect upon the king, that, without more ado, "he appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field, since the day she left the land even until now." See here what a succession of benefits miraculously bestowed upon this good woman in reward of her charity, as the more immediate end proposed by them, but which, at the same time, most admirably displayed the infinite power and goodness of God, and cannot fail to produce the most excellent effects in the hearts of all who believe them, as well as it did in those who received the mmediate beneficent effects produced by them.

VIII. The deliverance of the three children from the furnace and of Daniel from the den of lions, belong in a particular manner also to this class; for though they produced more extensive good effects than the preservation of these holy men, and were proofs to these heathen nations where they were done, that the God of Israel was the only true God, as we have seen above; yet the holy scripture attributes these most glorious miracles in a particular manner as a reward for the confidence these good souls had in God, and represents their constancy in his service as the more immediate end directly intended by them. The confidence which the three holy young men had in God, is plain from their heroic answer to Nebuchadnezzar, when he ordered them, under pain of being thrown into the fiery furnace, to fall down and

^{* 2} Kings viii.

adore the idol he had set up, adding this impious vaunt, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"* To which they replied, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us from thine hand, () king." And their constancy in the service of their God, they express in the following verse in these beautiful words, "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up." And that their miraculous preservation was intended directly as a reward of these their virtues, is acknowledged by the king himself, when after calling them out of the furnace, he said. "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Masach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants. WHO TRUSTED IN HIM—and yielded their bodies, THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SERVE NOR WORSHIP ANY GOD EXCEPT THEIR OWN GOD." And as for Daniel, when the king came next morning to the den of lions, and cried to him, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, WHOM THOU SERVEST CONTINUALLY, able to deliver thee from the lions? Daniel immediately answered him, my God has sent his angel, and has shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him INNOCENCY WAS FOUND IN ME." And upon this, by the king's command, "Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." These beautiful examples need no application.

IX. To the third class belong all these examples in holy writ, in which we find the divine goodness condescending to work miracles, and in many cases even of the first rate, where the immediate end directly intended was only to supply the various bodily wants of particular persons, and that sometimes in things of so little consequence as to unassisted natural reason would seem perfectly trifling and altogether unworthy of such divine

[▼] Dan. iii. 15. † Ibid. 17. ‡ Ibid. 28. § Dan. vi. 20. [Ibid. 23.

interposition. Sampson is employed by Almighty God to deliver his people from the yoke of the Philistines, and to fight their battles against these their enemies. For this purpose he is endued with a most amazing strength, with which he performs wonders. One day he goes out against them all alone, with no other arms than the jaw-bone of an ass, he enters the battle, gains an entire victory, and kills a thousand men with his own hand; but alas! scorched by the heat of the day and exhausted with such hard labour, he is upon the point of perishing himself with thirst after the battle is ended. Does the Almighty forsake his servant in this extremity! By no means; he even works a miracle to relieve him; for upon his crying to him for help, he clove an hollow place that was in the jaw-bone of the ass, which he had thrown out of his hand; and lo! it sends forth a stream of water to supply his want, relieve his thirst and refresh him.*

X. The great Elias is ordered to fly to the desert from the face of his persecuting enemy who sought his life on account of his steady adherence to the service of his God. This may be thought to have been only flying from one death to another,—from the sword of Achab to famish in the wilderness. But his God is his Protector, and works a most unheard-of miracle to sustain him. He commands the wild ravens to provide for his servant, and accordingly they bring him every day a piece of flesh and a loaf of bread, whilst the brook supplied his drink; and this miraculous provision continued to be brought him daily so long as he stayed in that desert. Another time the same great prophet was again in the wilderness, destitute of all human assistance, and an angel is sent with a cake of bread and a bottle of water to feed him, and such strength was communicated to him by this miraculous food that he needed nothing else for the space of forty days thereafter.

XI. A poor widow woman is oppressed by her hus-

band's creditors, who, as she had nothing to pay his debts, seize upon her two sons to carry them off for In this sad distress she flies to the prophet Elisha, and puts him in mind that her husband has been a good man, as he himself knew, and one that feared the Lord. The prophet, moved with compassion at her situation, asks what she had in the house, and she answered, she had nothing in the world but a pot of oil.-Well, says the man of God, "Go borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels, borrow not a few; and when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and thou shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full." Accordingly they went to work, and the oil was so multiplied in her hands, that it continued to flow in great abundance, and never stopped till they had no more empty vessels in which to put it. Then the prophet ordered her to sell this miraculous oil and pay her debts, and that she and her sons might live upon the rest.*

XII. Again, "The men of the city said unto Elisha, behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my Lord seeth, but the water is bad and the ground barren. And he said, bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein, and they brought it to him; and he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said: Thus sayeth the Lord, I have healed these waters, there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he

spake."+

XIII. In the time of the great dearth, the same holy prophet "came to Gilgal, and a number of the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant: set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets; and one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gath-

^{* 2} Kings iv.

ered thereof wild gourds his lapful, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat; and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot! And they could not eat thereof."* The prophet, unwilling to lose so great a quantity of food in the time of famine, immediately performs a miracle to cure it, by casting a little meal into the pot; "and he said, then bring meal: And he cast it into the pot, and he said, Pour out for the people that they may eat, and there was no barm in the pot." Again, during the same famine, a present was brought to Elisha of twenty loaves of barley, and some full ears of corn, which he immediately ordered to be given to the people, "and his servant said, What! should I set this before a hundred men!" But Elisha replied, "Give the people that they may eat, for thus sayeth the Lord, they shall eat and shall leave thereof;" and accordingly these loaves were so miraculously multiplied, that "they did eat and left thereof, accordingly to the word of the Lord.";

XIV. When the two holy prophets, Elijah and Elisha, walking together to the place where the former was to be taken up, came to the river Jordan, which they had no human means to pass, after standing a little while by the river, "Elijah took his mantle and wrapt it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground."\$ And the same miraculous division was repeated again in favour of Elisha alone, when he was returning home, after his master had been taken from him. Lastly, to mention only one instance more under this class,—when the sons of the prophets were cutting wood on the banks of the Jordan, in order to enlarge their dwelling-place, which was become too strait for them, it happened that the head of one of their axes fell into the water; the poor man was greatly afflicted at this misfortune, and

cried to Elisha who was present with them, "Alast master," for it was borrowed. Elisha, pitying the poor man's case, said, "where fell it? and he shewed him the place; and he cut down a stick and cast it in thither and the iron did swim. Therefore, said he, take it up to thee, and he put out his hand and took it." Many other instances might be brought of the curing or diseases, delivering from danger and the like, which frequently occur throughout the whole scripture; but those I have here related are fully sufficient for my

present purpose.

XV. Now, in all the examples related under this class and others of the same nature that might be adduced, we see evidently, that the immediate end directly intended by Almighty God in working these most surprising miracles, was the relieving of the temporal wants of particular persons; and that not only in the greater and more necessary concerns of life, such as supplying them with food when they must have perished without it, or delivering them from other imminent dangers of death, but even in their more trifling wants, and such as in the judgment of natural reason might seem quite unworthy of such great miracles. The end proposed by these miracles was not the confirming any point of disputed doctrine or authorizing any new revelation—for here there was none—neither was it properly to manifest the sanctity of his servants, though this was also a consequence of some of them; for of this, in most of these cases, the people were already fully convinced: Yea, and several of the most remarkable of these miracles were done in private, in favour or these holy people, and unknown to the world till they themselves disclosed them. Hence, then, the only end immediately and directly intended by these miracles was, as we have seen, the relieving of the temporal wants of particular persons in distress. We must therefore conclude, s a necessary consequence of these facts, that

^{* 2} Kings vi. 6.

the relieving of the temporal wants even of particular persons, is in the judgment of God himself, an end worthy of him to procure, even by the most extraordinary miracles. But it will clearly appear, at the same time, that they are made a most admirable and well adapted means to secure the other more valuable and important ends, common to every miracle, namely, the glory of God and the good of souls; since nothing can give us a more feeling sense of the infinite goodness and power of God, than when we ourselves receive the beneficent effects of miracles wrought in our favour, nor, at the same time, contribute more powerfully to excite the most ardent affections of gratitude, confidence, and love towards our kind and bountiful benefactor. The futility, also, and weakness of the deistical objections, drawn either from the apparent insignificancy of the thing done—as being thereby unworthy of God—or from its amazing greatness—as requiring an end proportionably great also will easily appear from what has been said above. great and important ends of miracles are to manifest the goodness and power and other attributes of God and to promote the sanctification of our souls,—now what can more contribute to those glorious ends than to see the Almighty condescending to work miracles to supply even the most trifling wants of his servants, such as to help them over a river on their journey and cause the iron head of an axe, when lost in water, to swim on the surface, and be restored to them again? Or to find him, on the other hand, when their necessities require it, overturning, in a manner, all the laws of the universe, and reversing the very nature of things, so as to tame the rage of hungry and furious lions, and deprive the fire of its power to burn, in order to defend those that trust in him? The trifling smallness,—if I may be allowed to use the expression,—of the miracles wrought in the one case, and their amazing greatness in the other, equally contribute to the same great end, namely, the manifesting in the most lively colors the infinite love of God to man; and those who make objections against

miracles from these very considerations, show that they themselves are perfectly ignorant of the nature of true love and of the tender feelings of the human heart.— On the one hand, true love thinks nothing little, nothing trifling, nothing unworthy its attention, that can be of service or give pleasure to the beloved object, however much it may appear so to an indifferent person: And on the other hand, it braves all dangers, despises all hardships and cheerfully undergoes all labors, however great, or even seemingly above its strength, when the interest or happiness of the beloved object requires it. And such is the delicate frame of the human heart, that it is impossible for it to resist the influence of such conduct; it is by no means proof against attacks of this kind; for, whether we perceive a continual attention in another to give us pleasure and oblige us on all occasions, however triffing in themselves, or see that person exerting himself in doing great things for our service; in either case we are equally convinced of the sincerity of his love, and our heart is naturally and most powerfully inclined to make a suitable return of the most tender affection. How convincing, then, and, at the same time, how tender, how affecting a proof is it of the infinite love of God to man, when we see him, the sovereign Lord of all things, condescend to make use of both these ways of gaining our hearts to himself, when, on the one hand, he shows such an amiable attention to all our little wants, as even miraculously to supply them; and, on the other, freely performs the greatest miracles when the necessities of his servants require it? What an effect must this have upon a grateful soul? what tender and affectionate feelings must it necessarily raise in the breast of man towards that supreme and all-glorious Being, who gives such affecting proofs of the sincerity of his love to us, and uses such amiable arts to court and gain our affections! But, oh! what obdurate, what inhuman hearts must those have, who can resist these attacks, nay, who even dare to laugh at and ridicule this amiable conduct of their Creator, call in ques

tion, and absolutely deny its existence; and that for those very reasons which are the most convincing proofs of the sincerity, as well as of the greatness of his love and affection to his creatures! But to return—

XVI. The fourth and last class which I shall here take notice of, contains cases whose immediate tendency is very different from those of the former, though equally conducive to the same great general ends of miracles, the glory of God and the good of souls, by manifesting along with his almighty power, the severity and rigor of his justice, and striking the hearts of sinners with a sense of their danger, and a salutary fear of offending him, whom they see so severely punishing either themselves or others for past sins, and even working miracles no less amazing than those of the former classes, for accomplishing this end with the greater certainty. Some of the miracles of this class have immediately in view only the correction of the sinner himself, and not his destruction; whilst others destroy the delinquent entirely, and serve principally for an example and warning to others; to which, however, the former do also greatly contribute. And in both we shall find, that the divine wisdom operates in the same way as in the preceding cases,-sometimes accomplishing these ends by the weakest instruments, which, in the language of modern infidels, would be called unworthy of God, and below his Majesty; such as the flies, frogs, lice, and other vermin by which he punished Pharaoh; the hornets by which he drove out the Canaanites before his people, and the like; and at other times performing the greatest miracles for the same purposes; equally, however, in both cases manifesting his own glory and sovereignty. By the former he convinces mankind that he stands in no need of the help of his creatures to accomplish his ends, or to punish those who offend him, whilst the weakest instruments in his hand serve equally for this purpose as the greatest; and by the latter he shows, in the most feeling manner, the immensity of his power, whilst all created nature becomes subservient to his will, when he

pleases to employ it.

XVII. The first example I shall take notice of here, is that of Lot's wife. When the angels had taken Lot and his family out of Sodom, they commanded them to fiee with all speed to the place appointed for them, that they might not be involved in the destruction of that devoted city, and expressly forbade them so much as to look behind them; "Escape for thy life," says the angel; "look not behind thee, neither stay thee in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." Lot's wife, solicitous for her friends and the goods she had left behind her in Sodom, unmindful of, or disregarding this order of the angel, looked back to see what was doing, and immediately the hand of God was upon her in a most miraculous manner in punishment of her disobedience, and she became a pillar of salt; a lasting monument of the severity of God's justice upon those who disobey him!* Now, here we must observe that the unmediate good end obtained by this miracle regarded only Lot and his two daughters, who alone at that time knew the prohibition given, the transgression committed. and the punishment inflicted; and consequently, we see here a miracle wrought solely by the Almighty power of God, namely, the instantaneous changing of a living person into a pillar of salt,—performed to the utter destruction of that person in punishment of her crime, where the immediate end directly intended, and, as may be presumed, obtained, was the benefit of three souls only, being a warning to them against sin; and consequently, that this, in the judgment of God, is an end worthy of him to be procured even by the greatest miracle. But then it must be also owned that the good effects of it were not confined to these three, but extended to all those in after-ages who should hear and believe what is here related, as displaying to them also the

^{*} Gen. xix.

dreadful consequences of sin, and the severity of the divine judgments, and of course stirring up in their hearts a salutary fear of offending their great Creator .-And this is the very use that Jesus Christ himself makes of this example in the gospel, when foretelling the manner of the revelation of the Son of Man, which to each one in particular will be at the hour of his death, and exhorting us to withdraw our affections from all creatures, as the best disposition to be in for that day: he says, "Remember Lot's wife," intimating, that as her affection for what she possessed and was obliged to leave behind her in Sodom, prompted her to look back contrary to the command given her, and consequently brought on her utter ruin and destruction, so likewise, if our hearts and affections be attached to the things of this world when we are forced to leave all behind us, and to appear before the Son of man at his revelation to us in the hour of death, this attachment will become an occasion of our offending God, and bring upon us likewise ruin and destruction.

XVIII. The beautiful history which the scripture gives us of Balaam and his ass deserves a particular place here, as displaying a most admirable miracle performed, for no other immediate and direct end but the correcting a person for a sin committed. When the second messengers of Balak came for Balaam to go to their master, upon his consulting God whether he should go or not, the answer he received was, "If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them." Balaam being very desirous of going himself, instead of waiting till they should come and call him, "rose up in the morning and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab." It were an injury done to the sacred scripture to give what follows in any other words than its own, they have something so particularly affecting in them. "And God's anger was kindled because he went: And the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him.

^{*} Luke xvii. 32.

Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. And Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way.-But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyard, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall, and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. AND THE LORD OPENED THE MOUTH OF THE ASS, and she said unto Balaam, what have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? and Balaam said unto the ass, because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am I not thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. And the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face; and the angel of the Lord said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me. And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times:-Unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee and saved her alive. And Balaam said, I have sinned. &c."* This beautiful relation needs neither comment nor application; for, though infidelity may find occasion here to laugh and sneer at the seeming dis-proportion between the thing done and the end to be

^{*} Numbers xxn.

gained, at the apparent inutility of being at so much pains to correct Balaam, which might have been brought about in a much simpler manner,—by the angel's appearing to himself, for example, and telling him he did wrong; and though the infidel may have recourse to his own vain and human ideas of what is becoming God to do or not to do, and tell us his infinite wisdom will surely go always by the nearest, plainest, and simplest means, to gain its ends; and that we are not to suppose, that Almighty God will use so many unnecessary means for what he could do by one alone, &c.; Yet the pious and faithful Christian, opposing this plain fact,—supported by the authority of God himself, against all these vain specutations, rejects all the idle ideas of human reason, concerning what is becoming or not becoming God to do; and, in this most extraordinary miracle, reads new and more convincing proofs of the infinite goodness and condescension of God towards his creatures, and finds in it the strongest incentives to love, praise, and adore his divine bounty; as also, of holy obedience to his good pleasure.

XIX. The disobedient prophet slain by a lion, is another example of this kind, where we see a most admirable miracle performed in punishment of disobedience to the orders of God, though in a matter in itself seemingly of very small importance, but intended as a warning and example to others, of the great attention we ought to have in perfectly obeying the divine orders, whether the matter be small or great. This prophet, after going down to Bethel, and there delivering his own prophecy against Jeroboam and his altar, and performing two great miracles in confirmation of it, was persuaded, by the lying testimony of another prophet in that place, to go to his house and eat and drink with him, contrary to the express command of God, who had absolutely forbidden him to eat bread or drink water there. It came to pass, as they sat at table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back, and he cried to the man of God that came from Judah, sav-

ing, Thus saith the Lord, forasmuch as thou hast diso beyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee,—thy carcass shall not come into the sepulchre of thy fathers.*" This prophecy was soon fulfilled; for, "when he was gone away upon his ass to return home, a lion met him by the way and slew him: and the carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it; the lion also stood by the carcass. --- Men passed by and saw this;" yet the lion never offered to hurt them, but stood by the carcass, till the other prophet came to take it away to bury it; and neither "eat the carcass nor tore the ass." Here we see a wild lion commissioned by God to execute his justice on this disobedient prophet, and performing his orders in the most exact and perfect manner, without turning to the right hand or to the left; nay, forgetting his natural ferocity, and perhaps the keen stings of hunger itself, he kills the prophet as he was ordered, but neither tears the carcass nor destroys the ass, nor does hurt to any that passed by, but guards the dead body, till the proper person came to bury it, and then returns to the woods from whence he came.

XX. The miraculous punishment of Gehazi, servant to Elisha the prophet, must also be particularly observed here. When this avaricious man had run after Naaman to get some money from him upon his being cured of his leprosy; returning to his master, "Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments? &c. The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper white as snow." We see here how the prophet knew all that had passed, though at a distance from him; and no sooner does he pronounce sentence upon his covetous

servant, than immediately the punishment is inflicted! What a demonstration of the divine justice! What a severe correction of Gehazi! What a lesson and warn-

ing to all others!

XXI. It is altogether needless to make any application of the facts related in this chapter; they speak for themselves, and show beyond reply that Almighty God himself judges it most becoming his divine Majesty, and worthy of his infinite wisdom, to perform the most amazing miracles, even where the immediate end proposed is only the benefit of particular persons, to supply their needs, to deliver them from dangers, or even only to gratify their ardent desires. And, consequently, objections formed against any miracle, from the pretended insignificancy of such ends, can never be admitted by a Christian, without impeaching the divine wisdom in all the above examples, and many other such, which are to be met with in the sacred scriptures. It is no less manifest how unworthy such objections are of a rational philosopher, as they only proceed from a real or pretended ignorance of some very obvious truths; which, as we have seen above, totally enervate every objection that can be drawn from that quarter.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE INSTRUMENTS USED IN PERFORMING MIRACLES.

I. It may perhaps, at first sight, appear of little consequence to treat this subject apart; but, upon reflection, we shall find several particulars that naturally come to be explained under this head, which serve still further to illustrate the nature of miracles, and to make us understand the proper sense of some expressions in the holy scriptures concerning them. Besides, since the

enemies of religion make a handle of the apparent weakness and insignificancy of the instruments used in working mirables, as an argument against their existence; it is necessary that this objection be properly examined, in order that we may be able to judge exactly what weight it ought to have. There is also another question concerning this subject, which deserves our particular attention, and about which the Christian world is much divided; namely, whether any respect and veneration are due, or may lawfully be paid to those instruments which divine wisdom is pleased to make use of in working miracles? I propose, then, under this head, to consider these three things in order. 1. What those instruments are, which God uses for performing miracles, and how they act. 2. What weight the argument has against the existence of miracles, which is drawn from the meanness of the instruments used in performing them. And 3. Whether any respect and veneration may law-

fully be paid to these instruments?

II. That Almighty God may use any creature he pleases as an instrument in his hands for working miracles, or may perform them without any such instrument at all, if he thinks proper, is a truth which cannot be called in question. But what he actually has used for this purpose, can only be known from experience, and principally from what he himself has revealed to us in his holy scriptures. Now, we find that he sometimes makes use of his rational creatures for this purpose; sometimes of irrational, and sometimes of those that are inanimate; each of which we shall consider apart.— The rational creatures used by God as his instruments in working miracles, are either angels or men. When an angel is said to perform any miracle, it may be under stood two ways. If the miracle wrought be not an absolute miracle, but only such with relation to man, and consequently within the compass of the natural abilities of an angel, then the expression means that the angel is the efficient cause of the miracle, and performs it immediately by his own strength, according to the orders he has received from God. But if the miracle be an absolute miracle, superior to all created power, and therefore proper to God alone, then the above expression signifies that the angel acts only as a mere instrument, doing or performing some condition appointed by God for him to do; and upon the doing of which God himself immediately performs the miracle. Of the former kind we have an example in the deliverance of Daniel from the lions; for, when the king came early in the morning to the den, to inquire if he was still alive, he immediately answered, "O king, live for ever! My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Here we see that the angel was sent by God to defend his servant, and restrain the fury of those raging animals that they should not hurt him; a thing which there is no reason to think exceeds the natural powers of an angel. Other examples of this kind are pretty frequent in holy writ. It is not perhaps so easy to give examples of the second kind; because, not knowing exactly to what extent an angel's natural power can reach, we cannot determine how far any of those miracles related in the scriptures as done by angels, were within their natural strength or not. We don't know, for example, if it be possible for an angel by himself to raise a flame of fire in an instant out of a rock; it would indeed seem more probable that it is not, and that this is a miracle proper to God alone; and if this be so, then we have an example of this second kind in what happened to Gideon's offering, when the angel appeared to him to give him the commission from God of delivering the people of Israel from the slavery of the Midianites. For when he brought out flesh, and bread, and broth, and laid them upon the rock before the angel, immediately, upon the angel's touching it with the end of his staff, "there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes."* Now, if the raising of this flame was the immediate work of God.

^{*} Judg. vi. 21.

then the angel's part, as God's instrument, was only to perform the outward condition appointed by God, of touching the offerings with his staff, and the effect, the work of God himself, immediately ensued. We have, indeed, one pretty certain example of this in the pool of Bethesda; of which the scripture says, "that an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had."* The instantaneous cure of diseases is the work of God alone; and, consequently, all these cures performed at this pool were done by him; the angel acting the part of God's instrument, at the appointed season, "went down and troubled the waters," which was the part allotted by God for him to do, as a condition pre-required to the performance of these cures.

III. When any miracle is said to be performed by men, the expression ought always to be understood in, the last sense, viz. that God performs the miracle by them as his visible instruments, upon their doing what he requires of them for this purpose. Thus we are told in the scripture, that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul," where we see God wrought the miracles, and St. Paul was only the means or instrument by which he did so. It is in this sense, therefore, we are to understand these other expressions of scripture, where the working of the miracle is attributed immediately to man, as in the Acts ii. 43, where it is said, "And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles," for it cannot be said, that the apostles did these things by their own natural strength, as the efficient causes, but that Almighty God did them by their means.

IV. Now, the co-operation which Almighty God requires from man, when he uses him as his instrument in working miracles, is both internal and external. The internal consists in a strong faith and confidence in God, which is the disposition of soul that God always gives

^{*} John v. 4.

to those by whom he works miracles; it being the ground upon which the grace of miracles is founded. Thus our Saviour assures us, that "all things are possible to him that believes;" and that a strong faith "is able to remove mountains," because it powerfully moves and engages God to do what it so firmly expects from him: And hence it is, that those whom God employs to work miracles know, from the interior confidence he gives them, that the miracle is to be wrought, and generally foretell they are to do it, by which a double lustre is added to the miracle, and its authority greatly enhanced. The exterior co-operation of man is employed many different ways, of which the following, declared in holy writ, are the principal: First, By command; thus Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it did so: upon which the scripture adds, "And the Lord hearkened to (or obeyed) the voice of a man;"* showing by this expression, that God was the efficient cause, by whom the sun was stopped, and that he did it at the command or desire of Joshua his servant. Elias also, once and again, commanded fire to come down from Heaven, and he was instantly obeyed: And when St. Peter cured the lame man he spoke also by command, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Secondly, By prayer, of which there are numbers of examples throughout the scripture. Thus, when Moses undertook and promised that Pharaoh should be delivered from the frogs and flies, though he had such confidence in God, as to give a positive and absolute declaration to Pharaoh, that at the time he appointed they should leave him; he had also recourse to prayer as the external part God required of him to act in this manner: "And Moses cried unto the Lord, because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh, and the Lord did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died," etc. Again, "And Moses in-Moses, and he removed the swarms of flies." So

also Samson in his great thirst cried unto the Lord, and He most miraculously supplied him with water out of the dry jaw-bone of an ass.* In like manner, Samuel, full of confidence that God would perform the miracle of sending thunder and rain in an instant, at his desiring t, first foretold it boldly to the people, and then "cried unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain" in a moment, though a fine clear harvest day. † Elias, in his famous competition with Baal's prophets, had scarcely finished his prayer, when "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood," etc.‡ Thus also the miracles wrought on Gideon's fleece, the sun's going back ten degrees, and numbers of others related in the holy scriptures, were obtained by prayer, as the external condition required on the part of man. Thirdly, By touching; thus the sick were cured by laying on hands, and Elijah and Elisha, when they raised from the dead the sons of the two women with whom they dwelt, both prayed and stretched out their bodies upon the dead corpse, and they were immediately restored to life. Of Elijah, the scripture says, "And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came to him again, and he revived," thereby distinguishing, as we have done above, the part that belonged to God from what was done by the prophet.— Fourthly, By prayer and command together; thus when St. Peter raised up Tabitha from the dead, "he prayed; and turning himself to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise; and she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up." Fifthly, By affirming the thing to be so; thus, the moment Elisha said to his servant, "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee;" that instant he was immediately seized with it, "and he went out from his presence a leper white as snow." Sixthly, By affirming it in the name of God; so Elisha said to the widow of Zarepthah, "Thus saith the Lord, the barrel of meal

^{*} Judg. xv. † 1 Sam. xii. 18. § 1 Kings xvii. 22. || Acts ix.

^{‡ 1} Kings xviii. ¶ 2 Kings v. 27.

shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth."* This last is very common among the prophets, and is a kind of prophecy flowing from their strong faith.

V. In all the above cases we see the different ways in which men co-operated immediately by themselves as instruments in the hand of God for working miracles; but in many other cases he required that those by whom he wrought any miracle should use other inanimate creatures for this purpose as inferior instruments; and, upon their doing with these what he required, the miracle was immediately performed. Thus he commanded Moses to smite the waters of Egypt with his rod, that they might be turned into blood, and to stretch out his rod over the Red Sea, that it might be divided, I and to smite the rock that it might send forth water. § Aaron also is commanded to stretch out his hand with his rod over the streams that the frogs might come up, and to strike the dust of the earth with his rod that it might become lice. All which was done accordingly, whenever these two great men performed the part assigned them by God. The respective parts which God and they acted in all these and other such cases, is particularly distinguished in the plagues of hail and locusts, where, after relating what God commanded them to do, the Scripture adds, "and Moses stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail," etc. ** And, again, "Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought the east wind—and the east wind brought the locusts."+

VI. Now it is here particularly to be observed, that God has been pleased to make use of many different creatures in the hands of his servants as inferior instruments for working miracles, and often of such as appear the meanest and most insignificant in the eyes of man. What more worthless and mean than burnt ashes? yet

Almighty God commands Moses to take some ashes from the furnace, and "sprinkle them towards heaven," that is, throw them up in the air, in order to produce the plague of "boils breaking out on man and beast through-out all the land of Egypt."* So Elijah, smiting the waters of Jordan "with his mantle, they were divided hither and thither," and he and Elisha "went over on dry ground."† A handful of salt, thrown by Elisha into the springs of poisonous and unwholesome waters, both healed the waters and made the country fertile, which before had been barren. A little meal, thrown into the pot of pottage, by the same prophet, cured it of the poison of these noxious herbs, which had been inadvertently put into it.§ A bit of wood, cut down from the tree, being thrown into the Jordan by the same holy man, caused the heavy lump of iron that had fallen into the river to rise up, and swim on the surface of the waters. From these, then, and many other such examples, which we meet with in holy scripture, we see clearly that Almighty God has often made use of the meanest creatures, in the hands of his holy servants, as instruments by which he performs the most astonishing miracles.

VII. Having thus seen in what manner Divine Wisdom makes use of His rational creatures in the working of miracles, and what part they act therein, I now proceed to consider the examples we have in the holy scriptures, which discover to us in what manner the irrational creatures are used by Almighty God for the same end. And on this we may be very brief; for whatever way the learned world may account for what is called *instinct* in the brute creation, certain it is, that as they have not free will to resist the impressions which the Creator makes upon them, they are, in this respect, more immediately under his influence, and that whatever he is pleased to require of them, they are immediately

obedient to his holy will. When Almighty God requires any thing of man, he not only manifests his will to him externally, but also must assist him by the internal influence of his grace to perform it. It is true, when he absolutely wills that man should comply, he infallibly obtains his compliance without prejudice to his liberty: but it is also no less true that man too often resists the will of his Creator, nay, acts diametrically the reverse of what he knows his Creator requires of him. But with the irrational creatures it is not so; they are incapable of knowing and understanding the will of their Master, and they are also incapable of resisting whatever impressions he is pleased to make upon them, however contrary they may be to their natural disposition, or to those usual modes of action to which their ordinary in-The miracles which God performs stinct impels them. by these creatures, generally consist in making them act and behave in a manner which is quite contrary to their natural mode of conduct, in order to obtain thereby such ends as the Divine Wisdom has in view by so doing.-Now, the holy scripture points out some examples of this kind, where God Almighty was pleased to make use of brute creatures, and make them act in a very extraordinary manner for promoting his own designs on men: First, For correcting sinners; thus he gave to Balaam's ass the power of speech, and enabled it to argue in a rational manner, in order to convince that wicked prophet of his unreasonable conduct, and of his cruelty towards Secondly, For punishing sinners; thus he sent swarms of hornets upon the people of Canaan to destroy them by their stings, and foretold that he would do so to punish those wicked nations, and convince his own people that he fought for them.* In like manner, after the die persion of the ten tribes, when the new inhabitants cam, to dwell in the land, the scripture says, "And so it was that at the beginning of their dwelling there they feared not the Lord; therefore the Lord sent lions among them

^{*} See Exod xxIII 28, Deut. VII. 20, and Joshua xXIV 12.

which slew some of them.* In both these cases, the scripture assures us that the behaviour of these hornets and lions, in leaving their own places in such numbers, and attacking whole nations of people, contrary to their natural disposition—as these people were not injuring them nor destroying them-was the immediate work of God, for punishing those sinful people. Several other examples of this kind we also have in the locusts, frogs, flies, lice, &c., with which the Egyptians were scourged; for though these miraculous punishments were brought about by means of Moses and Aaron—which led me to take notice of them in the former class of the rational instruments—vet, as it was not what Moses and Aaron did, but the immediate influence of the will of God upon these creatures which determined them to torment the Egyptians, whilst they had no power to hurt the people of God; they are, therefore, proper examples here also to show how God is pleased to make the very brutes themselves act in a miraculous manner, when he pleases, for his own wise ends and purposes. We have also another example of this kind in the fiery serpents which he sent among his people as a punishment of their murmuring against him. Thirdly, For bestowing favours upon his faithful servants; thus he commanded the ravens to feed Elijah in the wilderness, and these creatures, obedient to the divine will, though diametrically opposite to their own natures, never failed, during all the time the prophet stayed there, to bring him bread and flesh twice every day.

VIII. The last class of instruments used immediately by God himself in working miracles, as above taken notice of, are the inanimate creatures. These are of different kinds, as we find taken notice of in scripture, but chiefly these four: holy relics, holy images, holy places, and holy things consecrated to the external worship of God; by means of all which we find many surprising miracles performed by Almighty God, and related both

^{* 2} Kings xvii. 25.

in the Old and New Testaments. But it will not be amiss here, before we consider the examples themselves, to explain what is meant by the word holy; for there seems to be some ambiguity in it, which may occasion mistakes, and, on that account, make a proper explica-

tion of it necessary.

God is essential holiness, and the source of all holiness, and, therefore, the nearer any creature approaches to God, the more holy it must be. Hence holiness, in the most general sense of the word, signifies the being separated from other creatures, and united to the Creator. This separation and union may be done several different ways, according to the nature of the thing which we call holy; and it is from this difference in the nature of the separation from other creatures, and of the union with God, that the different senses of the word holy take their rise, of which we shall here consider the most remarkable.

IX. The word holiness, or sanctity, when applied to rational creatures, is the same as Christian virtue and perfection; for the more the heart of man is detached from all inordinate tie or affection to any creature, and the more he is united in his affections to God, the more holy, the more virtuous, the more perfect he is. By this expression—'a holy person'—is understood one who is a great friend of God, highly favoured by him, adorned with his holy grace, separated in his affections from all irregular or inordinate tie to any creature, and united, by a holy resignation of his will, to his great Creator.—And, in this sense, it implies great purity of heart and love to God, on the part of man, and reciprocal affection on the part of God towards him, adorning his soul in a particular manner with his divine grace and holy virtues.

X. Another tie by which man becomes united to God is, when he is employed by God as his minister and ambassador to man, and for this end has received from God that sacred authority and those spiritual powers which are necessary for acting in that character. The union

here with God is manifest, and this union naturally im plies in such a person also the separation from all such worldly or secular employments as might in the least degree interfere with or hinder the duties of the high station to which God has called him. Thus, St. Paul, speaking of his apostleship, says, that he was "called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God;"* that is, separated from all secular concerns, and dedicated to the service of God and of his gospel; and writing to Timothy, he calls the ministers of the gospel soldiers of Jesus Christ, employed in fighting his battles; and says to Timothy, "Thou, therefore, endure hard labours as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier." For this reason, the ministers of God are always esteemed holy; and undoubtedly they are so in the sense here explained, that is in the character they bear, and in the powers and authority with which God has vested them. But as the union with God, and separation from creatures, in this case, are very different from those in the preceding case, so our idea of the holiness resulting from them is different also; the one is holiness of person, the other holiness of character; the former may well be and often is without the latter; but the light of reason, at first view, shows that the latter ought always to be accomplished by the former; yet this is only a moral congruency, but by no means an absolute necessity; seeing that the character and all its powers may exist and are holy, though there be no holiness of person; nay, what is much to be regretted, it is but too often the case that the sanctity of the person does not keep pace with that of the character.

XI. If we now consider what the term holiness means when spolied to inanimate things, we shall find it implies a very different idea from both the former, and also among terms elves, according to the different connections

these creatures have with God. For, first, Some things are set apart for the external worship of God, and dedicated totally to his service—such as the ark, the temple, the churches, the altar, sacred vestments, sacred vessels, and the like-which are, therefore, called and esteemed Their separation from other creatures consists in this, that they are no more to be used for profane uses, nor by common hands; they no longer belong to this world, nor to worldly purposes; and they are not to be handled nor treated in a light, careless manner, but with a due respect as things belonging to God, and united to him by being entirely appropriated to his service. Secondly, There are some things which God Almighty has himself expressly appointed and ordained to be used in his church, as the constant and undoubted means of bestowing upon our souls his heavenly grace—the greatest of all blessings-both for the cleansing away the guilt of our sins, and strengthening us against relapses. These are his holy sacraments, to the pious and devout use of which he has annexed these valuable graces. These, therefore, are most justly esteemed exceedingly holy, inasmuch as they are entirely separated from all profane uses, and can never be treated with disrespect nor abused, without the highest guilt being thereby incurred; and their union with God is extremely great, inasmuch as they are the never-failing channels of conveying his divine grace to our souls. Thirdly, There are other things which by human appointment are set apart for similar uses, and, therefore, esteemed sacred and holy by the Christian people. For seeing that the general conduct of divine providence is to make use of inanimate creatures as the means by which many blessings are bestowed on man; and knowing that prayer is a most powerful means to obtain such blessings from God, by the sanctified use of his creatures; and knowing, at the same time, that the public prayers of the church are the most efficacious of all others for this purpose; for these reasons it has been from the earliest ages the constant practice of the Christian world to set apart, as holy, certain things

which were blessed by the priests of the church imploring the divine goodness to be pleased, in virtue of these prayers, to grant certain special blessings to those who, with pious dispositions, should use these creatures over which such blessings have been made. Now, creatures thus blessed are esteemed holy according to that of St. Paul, "Every creature is good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God, and by prayer."* And this is properly what is meant by holy water, holy oil, blessed candles, ashes, palms, and the like. Their separation from other creatures and union with God consists in this, that they are set apart by the church as means of conveying the effects of her prayers to her children, and of obtaining some particular blessings for them, and, therefore, not to be used for profane uses but with the respect due to things set apart for such holy purposes. Fourthly, With regard to places, besides temples and churches mentioned above, which are solemnly dedicated to the divine service, and thereby justly esteemed holy, we find that epithet given to other places for a different reason. Thus, where God has been pleased, at any time, to manifest himself to man visibly, either by himself or by an angel, the place where this occurred is called holy, and a due respect commanded to be paid to it, as having been sanctified by the divine presence. Thus Moses at the burning bush, and Joshua when the angel appeared to him, were ordered to put off their shoes, for the place whereon they stood was holy ground. See also what a high idea Jacob had of the holiness of that place where God had appeared to him in his dream; "How dreadful," says he, "is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." † The holy Mount Sinai, or Horeb, was ever after called the "Mount of God," and esteemed most holy, because there God appeared with so much majesty to his people when he gave them the Ten Commandments In like manner St. Peter calls mount Tabor, on which he saw the transfiguration of his master, "the holy mount." Again, if there be any particular places where God is pleased to give more manifest and uncommon signs of his presence, and of his power and goodness, by bestowing favours on man in these places, which he does nowhere else; such places are also most justly esteemed and respected as holy places. Under this head also come all those places where the chief mysteries of the redemption of mankind were transacted, which, in the esteem of all Christians, contract a particular holiness upon that account. Now, the holiness of all those places, that is, their separation from other places, and the union they have with God, is easily perceived, but of a different species from those of the former classes.

XII. In all the above cases, the holiness of these creatures seems to be something inherent in them, upon account of the immediate and intrinsical connection they have with God; but there are, fifthly, two other things also esteemed holy, where the holiness seems to be more extrinsical, and more in the esteem of men than in the things themselves, as not resting in these things, but referred to something else to which they belong; and these are holy images and holy relics. Indeed, when relics consist in any part of the very body of a saint, that body, sanctified by the superabundant graces of God with which its soul was adorned;—that body which was the temple of the Holy Ghost, and whose blessed soul, to which it once was, and afterwards will be again united, is now reigning with Christ in glory, seems to inherit a considerable degree of intrinsic holiness, as much, at least, as several of those things above mentioned; but when the relics are not parts of any saint's body, but only things that had belonged to them in their lifetime, as their clothes, books, etc., or only things that had touched their bodies, the holiness which is attributed to them is of a more extrinsic kind, and acknowledged only in as far as they relate to, or have a connection with those holy persons of whom they are the relics. Such

also is the case with the holiness which men attribute to the pictures or images of Christ and his saints. However, even in this case, both with regard to relics and holy images, if at any time God should be pleased, by their means, to bestow in a miraculous manner any favour on man, they thereby contract another kind of sanctity of the same nature with that of holy places, or other things made use of by Almighty God as his instruments of bestowing benefits by miracles on mankind; and then they are holy upon a double account, both as being used by God for this last end, and also from the relation they have to the sacred persons to whom they belong. We must not forget here, sixthly, the holy scriptures, which are justly esteemed exceeding holy, as being dictated by the Holy Ghost, and containing the sacred truths of God, and thereby having a most intimate connection with him From what has been said, it is easy to see precisely the different senses in which these different creatures are esteemed and called holy, and the different grounds upon which this appellation is given them. We return now to relate the examples of miracles which the word of God presents to us as wrought by means of those inanimate holy things.

XIII. And first, with regard to holy images, we have a most beautiful example of this kind related in the book of Numbers, chap. xxi., where we are told, that when the people, upon a certain occasion, murmured and "spoke against God and against Moses, in order to punish this their great sin, the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died."* The people, upon this, repenting of their crime, and crying to God for mercy, the remedy he himself appointed was this; "and the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it up upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten," WHEN HE LOOKETH UPON IT, SHALL LIVE: and Moses made a serpent of brase, and put it upon a pole; and it

came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when HE BEHELD THE SERPENT OF BRASS HE LIVED." Here we see a holy image commanded to be set up in the sight of all the people by God himself, and a most extraordinary miracle, not once or twice, but numbers of times performed by simply looking upon it. I call this image holy for two reasons; first, upon account of its relation to Jesus Christ, of whom it was a type, figure or emblem, as he himself assures us in these words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thereby intimating to us, that as those who had been bit by the fiery serpents, and were on that account in danger of temporal death, were immediately and perfectly cured by only looking on the brazen image of these serpents which Moses lifted up in the camp; so all those who should in after-times be bit by the stings of the infernal serpents,—temptations to sin,—and be thereby in danger of eternal death, should find a speedy and a certain remedy by looking with a lively faith upon Jesus Christ lifted up upon the cross. For this reason. then, the brazen serpent was a lively image of Jesus Christ, and justly esteemed holy upon account of this relation to him; but it deserves also that appellation in a more immediate manner, by reason that Almighty God was pleased to make use of it as an instrument by which he performed a vast multitude of most amazing miracles. proper only to God himself to perform, namely, the immediate cure of the envenomed bite of these fiery serpents (which otherwise brought certain death), by only, looking on the image which God had ordered to be set up among his people for this very purpose. And here, in passing, I cannot forbear observing that this example is a most convincing proof that what the Protestants call the second commandment, but which in reality, is only an explanation of the first,—does by no means forbid the

^{*} Num. xxi. 8, 9.

making of pictures or images, even of holy things, and for religious purposes. For, can it ever be imagined, that had the great God given such a prohibition, he would himself, and that so soon after, have given orders to Moses to act in direct opposition to it? It is injurious to the divine wisdom to suppose that. The true and real sense of that part of the commandment, then, can only be what the words themselves clearly express, the forbidding to make such images, so as to worship them or serve them as if they were gods, by which they became idols, and those who thus served them were guilty of idolatry.*

XIV. With regard to miracles wrought by relics, we have several most singular instances of this in the holy scripture. When Elijah himself divided the waters of Jordan by smiting them with his mantle, this mantle was not then properly a relic, but the instrument in his hand by which God performed that miracle: but when Elisha returned with his master's mantle, and smote the waters with it, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? The mantle then was truly and properly a relic, and the miracle of dividing the waters of Jordan, which immediately ensued, was performed by Almighty God precisely by means of this mantle as a relic, upon account of its connection with his holy servant Elijah, to whom it formerly belonged, and in whose name he was called upon to perform it. Another most extraordinary miracle,—a miracle of the first order,—was performed by the bones of this great prophet Elisha, some time after his death, to wit, the raising of a dead man to life again: It is thus related in scripture: "And Elisha died, and they buried him; and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that behold they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched

^{* &#}x27;The original word in the Hebrew which the Vulgate version translates adore, is rendered in the Protestant translation by the phrase bow down, though in other passages the same word is translated to worship.—See Exod. xxxii. 8.

the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet."* Here there were no prayers used,—no means applied,—not even the smallest expectation or thought of such a thing as the dead man's being restored to life, which therefore is solely attributed, and was solely owing to his touching the relics of the holy prophet, as the means God was pleased to use for the purpose. In the New Testament also we have some very remarkable examples of the same thing, where we are told, that "aprons and handkerchiefs that had touched the body of St. Paul were brought unto the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Nay, so liberal was Almighty God in working miracles by any thing that had thus touched the bodies of his saints, that even the very shadow of St. Peter passing over the sick, was enough to cure them; for, "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people-insomuch that they brought forth the sick unto the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that, at the least, the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." And the poor woman with the bloody flux of whom mention is made in the gospel, by only touching the hem of our Saviour's garment, was immediately made whole.

XV. We have seen above several examples of miracles that were wrought by means of holy things dedicated to the service of God, particularly the ark of the covenant; the wonders performed by it in the passage of the people over Jordan; and the miraculous effects wrought by it among the Philistines; the falling of their idols before it; the misery and destruction of that people which accompanied it through all their cities wherever it went; and the miraculous punishments which were immediately inflicted by Almighty God upon those of his own people who profaned it. We have also taken notice of the miracles that were wrought in Babylon upon Belshazzar the king, when he profa-

^{* 2} Kings xiii. 20 21. ‡ Acts v. 12, 15.

[†] Acts xix. 12. § Jos. vi. and vii.

ned the sacred vessels which his father had carried off from Jerusalem.* I shall, therefore, under this head, only add one example more of a constant and standing miracle among the people of God by means of holy water, which never failed when the circumstances concurred in which it was appointed by God to be performed. It is related in the fifth chapter of Numbers, and was appointed by Almighty God for ascertaining the innocence, or discovering the guilt of any woman whom her husband suspected of being unfaithful to his bed; I shall relate the whole in the words of the scripture itself. "If the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, whether she be defiled or not, then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her-and the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord. And the priest shall take HOLY WATER in an earthen vessel, and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water-and the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, if no man hath lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man hath lain with thee besides thy husband, then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing; and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell; and this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell and thy thigh to rot. And the woman shall say Amen, amen. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water. And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse; and the water that causeth the curse shall

enter into her and become bitter—and when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot; and the woman shall be a curse among her people. But if the woman be not defiled, but be clean, then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed." This beautiful account which the scripture gives of this matter needs no comment.

XVI. We come now, finally, to consider the examples of miracles wrought in holy places, or to show that Almighty God is pleased to make use of some certain places preferable to others, in which he displays his munificence and liberality towards mankind, by performing miracles in their favour at these particular places, and bestowing other benefits upon them. The first . glorious instance of this kind which chiefly deserves our notice, is what happened at the dedication of the temple. This place being chosen by Almighty God as his own house, in which he was to dwell among men, he was resolved to be most liberal in bestowing his favours upon such as should have recourse to him for help in that place; and that all might know his purpose in this respect, he was pleased to direct, that when king Solomon offered up the prayer of the dedication, he should particularize all those different heads of favours which people might come to pray for. Solomon therefore begins his prayer, by begging, that His eyes may be open upon this house day and night; that if any injury be done a man, and the case be brought before the altar in this house, that "He would judge His servants—requiting the wicked, and justifying the righteous;" that if the people be overcome by their enemies, and return, and confess, and pray in this house, that He would "hear their prayer and forgive their sin, and bring them again to their own land;" that when the heavens are shut, and there is no rain, but consequently famine and misery, upon account of their sins, if "they pray

towards this place, and turn from their sins, that he would hear their prayer, forgive their sins, and send them rain" in its reason; in time of dearth or pestilence, or blasting, or mildew, or whatever sore or sickness there be, then "what prayer or what supplication soever of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when -every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief; and shall spread forth his hands in this house; then hear thou from heaven, thy dwelling place, and forgive and render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou knowest. Also, when strangers come and pray in this house, hear thou from heaven, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for, that all people may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name. If thy people go out to war, and pray unto thee—towards this house; hear thou their praver and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives, yet if they turn and pray unto thee and return to thee with all their hearts—and pray towards this house, which I have built for thy name—then hear thou their prayer, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee." Now, it is evident, that if this prayer was heard, and if Almighty God was always ready to grant the fervent prayers of his people made in this holy temple, or even made towards it, in all. those different circumstances here mentioned, or whatever other favour they might need from God; this will prove a most glorious example of the truth in question, -that God is more ready to show favours, to hear our prayers, and to bestow benefits upon us in some particular holy places, chosen by himself for this purpose, than in others. But that this was actually the case; that this prayer of Solomon was heard by God, and granted; and that he was determined to bestow all these tayours mentioned in it upon those who should ask them from him in this His holy temple, or even turned towards it, Alm ghty God was pleased to evince by a most glorious

miracle; for no sooner had Solomon ended his prayer, than "the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering; and the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priests of the Lord could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground and worshipped." And not only did God give this miraculous proof of his having heard Solomon's prayer, but also he "appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heaven that there be no rain; if I command the locusts to devour the land; or if I send pestilence among my people: if my people shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my name, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and will heal their land: Now mine eyes will be open, and mine ears attentive to the prayers that are made in this place; for now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name be there for ever, and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."* Here, then, we have a most irrefragable proof of Almighty God's choosing a certain place preferably to any other wherein to bestow his choicest blessings upon man, and confirming this his choice by a most glorious miracle performed before a vast multitude of people.

XVII. Again, when Naaman came to the prophet Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, and stood before his door with his horses and chariots, "Elisha sent a messenger unto him saying, go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean." Upon this, Naaman, not knowing the counsel of the Almighty, and, like our modern wits, laughing at the thought of God's doing miracles more in

^{*} See the whole at large, 2 Chron. vi. vii.

one place than another, was exceeding wroth, and said. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" etc. But he did not consider that his cure was not to be the effect of any natural quality of the water, but of the immediate power of God, who was pleased upon this occasion to exert that power by the waters of Jordan and no other; and accordingly, when, by the persuasion of his servants, he obeyed the prophet, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, he was immediately restored to perfect health; by which he was convinced that his cure was the work of Godwhom he acknowledged was the only true God-and who bestows his favours upon man when, how, and where he pleases. Another example similar to this we have in our Saviour's giving sight to the man born blind; for after anointing his eyes with the clay he had made, he said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. And he went and washed, and came seeing."* The incredulous of this age would laugh at this, and perhaps would say,—He might as well have washed any where else, as all that could be intended by washing was only to take off the clay which had been put upon his eyes. But every serious Christian will form a very different opinion, and say, that had he washed any where else he would not have got his sight at all, because this cure was not owing to any particular virtue either in the clay or in the water, but to the immediate operation of God, who had resolved to work this miracle at the pool of Siloam, and no where else. But the most remarkable example of this kind of any, is that of the famous pool of Bethesda with its five porches; where numbers of miracles were performed, and the most perfect cures wrought of the most inveterate, and otherwise incurable diseases; for, as the scripture tells us, "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the waters; whosoever then first, after the troubling the waters, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease

he had."* Now, as this never failed at the proper season when the angel descended, here we have a most admirable example of a particular place chosen by Almighty God, where a continual series of never-failing miracles were wrought for the benefit of the distressed, which were done at no other place whatsoever.

XVIII. We have now considered pretty fully the various kinds of instruments made use of by the divine wisdom in performing miracles, and have seen the proper way in which they act; we must now go on to examine what weight that argument has against the existence of miracles, which Deists and others draw from the meanness and insignificancy of the instruments used in performing them. If I were arguing upon this question with Christians who believe the sacred scriptures to be the word of God, and dictated by the Holy Ghost, it would soon and easily be determined. These sacred oracles assure us, that it is the ordinary conduct of the divine providence, to bring about the greatest events by the weakest instruments, in order thereby to confound the pride of man, and that no flesh might glory in itself; "the foolishness of God," says St. Paul, "is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." Nothing gives a faithful soul a more exalted idea of God than these words, wherein we see how infinitely superior He is to all creatures; He has no need of any one to help him; He has no need of means or instruments to perform his work; and for that reason, when he is pleased to use any such, he generally makes use of those which to human wisdom seem to bear the least proportion to the end proposed; thereby to confound all the prudence of man, and the more beautifully to display his own divine perfections. A pious Christian who knows this, is so far from being scandalized at the seeming meanness of the instruments used in performing miracles, or from having the most distant thought that this could be used as an argument against their existence, that, on the contrary, to him it is rather a confirmation of their reality, because more conformable to the ordinary conduct of Divine Providence, and more beautifully displaying His almighty power. Besides, such a person well knows that the scripture is full of examples of the most stupendous miracles brought about by the meanest instruments, of which we have seen a great many instances above; and as he is sensible that the best way to know what is becoming God to do, is to consider what he has already done; he therefore concludes that nothing is more becoming the infinite majesty of God, than to perform the greatest miracles by the weakest means. Is it not amazing then to hear people who pretend to be Christians, and some who even value themselves upon being zealous Christians, make use of this very argument against the existence of particular miracles, and join the common enemies of Christianity, in laying the axe to its root to undermine it? The only reason I can find for so unreasonable a conduct is what the holy prophet David says of the Israelites, upon a similar occasion, "They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works." Daily exposed to hear the blasphemous railleries of half-learned witlings against the sacred truths of religion, and reading their impious books with avidity, whilst they seldom or never give themselves the trouble to examine the weight of any one argument they adduce, or to search into the solid grounds of Christianity, or even to understand profoundly what it teaches; but dazzled with the pompous language and flashes of wit, under which the impleties of libertines are couched, they come insensibly to fall into their way of thinking, and look

^{*} Psalm evi. 35.

upon their apparent arguments as unanswerable. Were it not from this, or some such delusion, I do not see how a serious Christian could ever be imposed upon by the silly argument we have at present in hand, or draw from it a conclusion so contrary to fact, so injurious to Almighty God, and so nearly bordering upon blasphemy itself, as it arraigns the divine wisdom of folly, in having so frequently made use of the weakest and seemingly most inadequate instruments to perform the most glorious miracles, of which the sacred scriptures are full of

examples.

XIX. But leaving these apart, let us consider what can be said to show the weakness of this argument, when proposed by those who believe not the scripture. Why, in the first place, I would ask the favour of those gentlemen to show me wherein the strength of their argument precisely lies, to show me the connection between the reason alleged and the consequence drawn; for, I own, I am so blind that I cannot perceive it. I easily see, in the way they propose it, a sneer, a jest, a turn of ridicule; but for any solid connection of reason, I can perceive none. A miracle is related to have happened, and is attested by as convincing evidence as could be desired by any reasonable person in such matters; but the instruments used in performing it are, in the eyes of human wisdom, mean and insignificant; and immediately the existence of the miracle and all its evidence, are, upon this account, rejected with a sneer, and the person hooted at who should dare to believe it. Nay, without taking the pains to pass a thought upon the evidence establishing its existence—no sooner have they a glimpse of what they are pleased to call mean in the instrument used, than immediately the whole is turned into a laugh, and rejected with contempt as a manifest imposture. reason? is this philosophy? Before I can approve their conclusion, I must beg leave again to insist upon their showing me the connection of this their argument: "The instrument to us seems mean and insignificant; therefore the miracle, with all its evidence, is falsehood

and imposture." The only thing that occurs to me which might be alleged to give at least a shadow of reason in this matter, is one or other of the following arguments: First, There is no proportion between the means used and the effect produced; therefore it is impossible the effect should have happened. Secondly, It is unbecoming the divine wisdom to use such silly means to produce such amazing events; therefore the miracles never happened. The first of these proceeds upon a supposition which is manifestly false; to wit, that the means or instruments used have a physical influence, or co-operate to the effect produced; or that God uses them as helps for that purpose. By what we have seen above, and by the light of reason itself, it is evident that this supposition is false and ridiculous; and therefore the consequence drawn from it is equally so. The second argument is contrary to common sense itself, since it is plain that nothing gives us a higher or more noble idea of the power and wisdom of God, than to see him act in a manner so much superior to all the wisdom of man; and were there any proportion between the means used in miracles and the effects produced, the power of God would disappear; they would cease to be any longer miracles, as a proportionate cause could be assigned for the thing done. But when there is no such proportion: nay, when we evidently see the utmost disproportion between the means applied and the effect produced, we are then naturally led to admire the infinite power of God, who produces such amazing effects by means so immensely inferior to them. Besides, though these things which appear to us as concurring in the performing of miracles, be called instruments or means, yet it is but in very improper sense of the word they are so called, because in no respect whatever do they concur physically in producing the miracle; this is solely the work of God, and costs him only the will to do it. What we call means might, perhaps with greater propriety, be termed external signals in the eyes of men, to make the finger of God more evident to them; or, if you please, they may be

called conditions, which Almighty God required to be performed exteriorly by man, upon the performing of which, He himself alone, or his holy angels commissioned by Him, immediately work the miracle; consequently, as God Almighty may ordain any such condition he pleases, and is very far from looking upon those things as mean or insignificant which appear so to man (for all inanimate creatures are of equal worth before him), it is most unreasonable to say, that it is unbecoming God to use any of these he pleases for the above purposes.— Whatever different esteem man may put on ashes and gold, they are both of equal value before God, and consequently it is as much becoming him to use the one as the other in the performance of the greatest miracle. From which we must conclude, that the argument against the existence of any miracle, drawn from the apparent meanness or insignificancy of the instruments used, is a mere sophism, and concludes nothing; that it is altogether unbecoming a philosopher to make use of it, and, in the mouth of a Christian, bordering on blasphemy.

XX. I come now to the last thing proposed to be discussed under this head of instruments used by God in performing miracles; namely, to inquire whether any respect or veneration may lawfully be given to those creatures which Almighty God makes use of for this I know this is a point very much debated among Christians; and the world has seen a great many ridiculous things published upon this head. In order to throw as great light upon it as possible, I shall begin by examining what is the proper sense of these words, respect, veneration, worship, and the like; and by fixing the precise meaning in which I use them, I dare say, few or none that give themselves the trouble to reflect with a little attention upon their own minds, object to it. Now, in doing this, I apprehend we ought carefully to distinguish these three things; first, the judgment we form. in our understanding of the excellent qualities of any object proposed to us; secondly, the value or esteem we put upon it upon account of these excellencies;

thirdly, the external signs, either in words or actions, by which we manifest to others the opinion we have of its excellencies, and the value and esteem we put upon it on that account. These three things are naturally connected together, and flow from one another in the order here laid down; for, according to the judgment we form of the excellencies of any thing, so, generally speaking, is the esteem and value we attach to it; and when we have a high opinion of any object, and for that reason set great value on it, such is the strong connection between our souls and bodies, that we naturally show our esteem by outward signs expressive thereof, whether in words or actions: And these three things joined together seem to include the whole of that complex idea in its general sense, which is expressed by the words respect, veneration, worship, adoration, or the like. Hence, we may lay down the following general and unexceptionable rule, to regulate our inquiries into the point in question; "When the judgment we form of the excellencies of any object is exactly just; when we put such a value and esteem upon it as these excellencies deserve; and when we manifest outwardly, by our words or actions, these interior dispositions of our mind towards that object; then this is a just and laudable tribute of respect, which common sense itself must allow to be not only lawful, but a debt strictly due to any person or thing which possesses those excellencies that deserve to be so valued and esteemed. Indeed, we never fail to think ourselves entitled to respect from others, when we know, or even fancy ourselves to be possessed of any such excellency or valuable qualification."

XXI. Now, for the more perfect understanding of this matter, we must observe further. 1. That it is chiefly upon the justness and falsity of the judgment we form of the excellencies of the object, that the truth or falsehood of the subsequent respect depends. For, if I know a nobleman, for example, to be what he is, and form a true judgment concerning his dignity, and the

respect or veneration I owe to him conformably to this judgment, then such respect when given him is just and true; but if I, by a false judgment, take this nobleman to be the king, and consequently have that interior esteem for him, and show him that outward respect which belongs only to the king, then the respect and veneration I pay to him is false and unjust, and by no means belongs to him; but then it is clear that this is solely owing to the false judgment I make of him. And, on the other hand, when, by a false judgment, I look upon the object as not having the excellences which it really possesses; this leads to a want of due respect, or to a false respect, by defect, as the former is by excess. 2. The esteem and value for the object, subsequently to the judgment we form of its possessing such and such excellences, is not a necessary consequence of that judgment, nor is it always in the same degree in every person; it is an act of the will more than of the understanding, and is always a consequence of, and in proportion to the love and affection we have for the excellences of which we judge the object to be possessed. Thus, two men equally know all the properties and excellences of gold, and the many uses for which it can serve; but yet the value and esteem they put upon it is exceedingly different; the one, a miser, whose love and affections are fixed on his treasures, prefers them before every thing else, puts the highest value and esteem upon them, yea, is ready to sell his own soul for their sake; the other, whose love and affections are placed upon other objects, puts very little value upon gold, and parts with it upon any occasion with the greatest ease. A pious Christian and a libertine Deist both know, that a consecrated chalice, for example, is dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ upon his altars; the Christian puts a very high esteem upon it on this account, and treats it with great signs of respect, so as not to dare to touch it irreverently with his naked hand, because the love and esteem he has for Jesus Christ, make him love and respect a thing so nearly connected with him: The Deist, on

the other hand, who has no manner of regard for Jesus Christ, and of consequence has no esteem for what belongs to him, pays no more respect to a chalice consecrated to his service than to one that is not consecrated. and would have as little difficulty to carouse out of it as out of a common wine-glass. In both these examples, and such like that might be brought forward, each person forms the same true judgment that the object possesses certain qualities; but these qualities to the one person are valuable because he loves them; to the other are of little or no value, because he has no affection for them; and of course, though the judgment be the same, the subsequent esteem or value put upon the object, is very different, and in some cases none at all. 3. Such is the nature of our constitution, and of the connection between our souls and bodies, that when the soul is strongly affected, it naturally communicates this affection to the body also, producing in it certain outward motions or dispositions which correspond with these inward affections, and are demonstrations of them; Thus, joy, grief, fear, etc., never exist to any considerable degree in the soul, without immediately exciting corresponding signs in the body; and, in like manner, when we have any high esteem or value for any object, it will not fail to show itself both in our words and actions towards that object, whenever the proper occasion occurs for so doing. But here it must be observed, that these outward signs of respect or veneration are by no means an immediate consequence, nor even the signs of our knowledge that such and such particular excellences are in the object, but are always the result of, and in proportion to our love and esteem for these excellences; for they are the natural expressions of the love and esteem we have for them; and hence, the greater such love and esteem is, the more ardent the external expressions will naturally be. 4. As the excellences which the various objects about us possess, are of different kinds; hence, the motive of our respect, which arises from, and is founded on these excellences, and

consequently the respect itself must be of different kinds also. Thus, the motive of our esteem and respect for magistrates and princes, is the civil dignity and authority which they possess in the state; this is a civil excellency; and as it is the motive which influences us as citizens to give them the respect and veneration paid them, this veneration or worship and the outward signs by which we express it, is called a civil veneration. The motive of the respect children have for their parents, is that natural power and authority which parents have over them; and as the influence which this motive has on children in making them respect their parents, is the work of nature itself, hence this respect and veneration paid by them to their parents, and all the external expressions of it, is called a natural respect or veneration. The motive of the respect we pay to holy persons and holy things, is the connection these have with God; and though this connection in different persons and different things, may be very different, as we have seen above, yet, as they all agree in this general character of being some way or other connected with God, and as this connection of whatever kind it be, is the only motive of our veneration and regard for them, which is a religious motive, hence the respect and veneration we pay to such objects, with all its external expressions, is called religious respect, religious worship, or religious veneration. Lastly, The motives of the respect and veneration we pay to God himself, are his own divine perfections, for knowing him to be infinitely above all creatures, and worthy of being infinitely esteemed and beloved by us, we do esteem and respect him above all things whatever; and as this motive is totally divine, therefore the worship and veneration we pay to God upon that account, and all its exterior acts by which we express our inward disposition towards him, are called divine worship and acts of divine worship. 5. It is carefully to be noted, that sacrifice alone excepted (which of its own nature, as well as by the common sentiments of all mankind, is an external manifestation

of the belief we have of the divine Being and his infinite perfections, and of the Supreme veneration and worship which we give to him on that account), no other external act of respect whatever is in the least degree expressive of the judgment we form concerning the nature of the excellencies in the object to which we pay respect or veneration; and as this judgment is the motive of our respect, and determines the nature of it, it follows that no external act of respect, except sacrifice, has precisely of itself, and abstracting from the circumstances in which it is performed, any determinate signification of any one kind of worship more than another; but all such external acts are promiscuously used to signify natural, civil, religious, and divine worship, according to the object to whom they are paid. All that these external actions naturally represent is, that we do esteem, respect, and venerate the object to whom we pay them; the more ardently and affectionately we perform them, the more we show the sincerity of our love and respect for the object; but they have no manner of connection with the motive upon which our love and esteem is founded; and therefore, let them be used in ever so ardent a manner, we can never by them alone distinguish what is the internal motive which gives birth to them; nay, as hypocrisy can perfectly well imitate all these exterior signs of the internal affections, they may be used out of mockery and ridicule, as well as out of respect and veneration, as the soldiers did when they bowed the knee before our Saviour and saluted him, "Hail, King of the Jews." Now this is an observation which deserves particular attention; because, for want of this, it is, that the adversaries of the Catholic Church so obstinately persist in laying to her charge the most uncharitable and unjustifiable accusations of idolatry and superstition; for seeing the ardent and affectionate manner in which her children perform many outward acts of respect and esteem for holyarelics, and for the pictures and images of Jesus Christ and his saints, they immediately conclude from this, that they look

upon these things as gods, and pay them the worship due to God alone; than which conclusion nothing can be more unjust and unreasonable: These outward acts show, indeed, the sincerity of their love and regard for these objects, and for the persons with whom they are related, but by no means show the judgment they form of the nature of those excellencies for which they love them; this can only be known by their own declaration; and since they, upon all occasions, both in their books and conversations, do constantly declare their judgment of these objects to be quite the reverse of what is laid to their charge, it is ridiculous in the highest degree, as well as extremely uncharitable, so to accuse them.

XXII. After this clear and minute explication of the complex idea contained under these words, respect, worship, veneration, and such like, it will be an easy matter to determine the question under consideration, to wit.— Whether any respect or veneration may lawfully be given to holy persons and holy things, and in particular to those which the divine wisdom is pleased to use as his instruments in working miracles, or in bestowing any particular favour or benefit on man?—We need only apply the above observations, and particularly the rule there mentioned, and we will immediately see the justness of the following conclusions:—1. That all holy persons, places, and things deserve to be judged holy, according to the sense we have given of the word, namely, as separated from other creatures and common uses, and united with God by some means or other as above explained. 2. That, in consequence of this, they are in themselves more valuable, and deserve a higher esteem, and that a greater respect and veneration should be paid them than other persons, places, or things of the same kind, which have not such union or connection with the Deity.—Because these holy objects, besides what they have in common with others of the same kind, which puts them all upon an equal footing, have moreover that union and connection with God, which places them in a higher sphere, and renders them much more respectable than those that want it. 3. That, therefore, actually to have that esteem for them in our heart, and to show it outwardly by such words and actions as are expressive thereof, is not only lawful, but a debt strictly due to these objects, seeing they actually do possess those excellencies of separation from other creatures and union with the Creator, which justly deserve to be so valued and esteemed. 4. That, however, as their union with God is the only motive on which this superior veneration is grounded, it therefore follows, that the honour and respect paid to them ultimately terminates in God, and is, strictly speaking, an act of worship paid to him.

XXIII. All these conclusions are not only clear and evident from what has been said, but are in fact the very voice and language of nature itself. For, let us suppose that any human creature of common sense, and with the common feelings of humanity, had in his possession Elijah's mantle, or the handkerchiefs and aprons which had touched the body of St. Paul; and that the same miracles had been wrought in himself or others by their means while in his possession, which are recorded in the holy scriptures to have been wrought by them in former days, would that person pay no more regard, or put no greater value upon these objects than upon any others of the same kind? Would not nature itself dictate to him to value and esteem them above treasures of gold and silver? Would he not, both in words and actions, as occasions served, show this his esteem and veneration for them? Certainly he would; and let any man ask his own heart what he would do if it were his case, and, I dare say, it will give him the same answer. When the people of God were stung by the fiery serpents, and found an immediate remedy for the mortal bite by only looking at the brazen serpent set up by the command of God for this purpose, with what respect, with what reverence, with what veneration, must they have regarded that image! We need only examine our own hearts to know what they must have done on that occasion. So true it

is, that when once we know a thing to be connected with Almighty God—and much more if he has used it as an instrument of bestowing any extraordinary favour on man—if we have any sense of religion in our souls, and be not warped from the dictates of nature by passion or prejudice, we naturally, and without reflection, conceive in our hearts a high esteem and religious veneration for it, which as naturally manifests itself outwardly in our words and actions.

XXIV. I cannot omit here citing, in proof of what is said above, the authority of one who, all the world knows, is no friend to Popery or miracles; I mean the velebrated Dr. Middleton: The Observator, one of the Doctor's antagonists, had advanced, that "if God works a cure by dead men's bones, it does not follow - to the bones are to be worshipped." If this gentleman means that such bones are not to be worshipped as go'as, nor divine honour paid them, nobody but a fool will dispute the point with him;—for no Christian in his senses ever drew such a conclusion;—but if he means that, in the case proposed, no kind of respect, no veneration, no sort of worship at all, even such as is above explained, is to be given these bones, then all the above reasonings, and the voice of nature itself, cry out against him. Of this Dr. Middleton is so sensible, that in his remarka on the Observator (page 23), he answers with warmto to the above assertion; "but in fact it" [the religious veneration and worship of the miraculous bones] "immediately did follow, has, and must follow, in confusion of his silly hypothesis."

AXV. But we are under no necessity of naving recourse to the testimony of a Middleton, in confirmation of what is above advanced. The holy scriptores afford us a much more respectable authority to convince us of it; for in these sacred oracles we find repeated instances of the most profound external acts of respect, worship, and veneration paid to holy persons and holy things, both in words and actions, and especially to those whom Almighty God was pleased to use as his instruments in performing

miracles. Thus, when Obadiah was sent by Ahab to seek for water, and met the holy prophet Elijah by the way, "he knew him, and fell flat upon his face."* The sons of the prophets, when they saw Elisha divide the waters of Jordan, and pass through on dry land, said, "the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha; and they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him." After the defeat of the people of God at Ai, "Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face BEFORE THE ARK OF THE LORD until the even-tide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.". See here how profound an external act of worship is paid to the ark, an inanimate creature! In the days of Samuel, when the Israelites were defeated the first time by the Philistines, they said, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us it MAY SAVE US out of the hands of our enemies." Here we find the safety of the people attributed to the ark in scripture language; and, to omit other examples of this kind, I shall only add, that to show us that all such religious worship paid to holy persons and holy things was approved of, and agreeable to God, and even required by him, we need only recall what has been said of the miraculous punishments inflicted by God on those who failed in this duty. Hence, therefore, we may justly conclude—"that it is most consonant to right reason, agreeable to the voice and dictates of nature, required by Almighty God, and the neglect of it punished by him, that a due esteem and religious veneration be paid, for his sake, to all holy persons and holy things, especially such as he is pleased to make use of as instruments of manifesting his own glory, and promoting the good of man, in working miracles."

XXVI. Before I leave this subject, relating to the instruments used by Almighty God in performing mira-

cles, it will be proper to examine a question that naturally occurs here, namely, Whether he at any time makes use of wicked men as his instruments for this purpose? That those who are servants of God, in high favour with him, and honoured with the gift of miracles, may fall even into the most grievous sins, is not called in question. St. Peter was sent with his fellow-apostles to cure the sick, cast out devils, and to do other wonderful things, and yet we know how he afterwards fell into a dreadful crime. Neither do we inquire here whether wicked men, by the agency of evil spirits, may sometimes perform prodigies and surprising things; this is readily granted; the scripture is clear upon it; but such prodigies are by no means true miracles, but lying signs and wonders; neither are such men instruments in the hands of God in performing these miracles, but instruments in the hand of the devil. But what we are here to enquire is, Whether Almighty God, at any time, makes use of wicked men, who openly live bad lives, and whilst they are in a state of enmity with him, as his instruments by whom to work real miracles? and in what manner or on what grounds he does so? In order to be able to form a just and exact judgment in this matter, I shall first consider such examples as we find in the holy scriptures relating thereto, and then see what light they give us in this question.

XXVII. The first we meet with is that of Balaam.—Interpreters are not unanimous in their opinions concerning this man, whether he really was a prophet of the Most High God, though a wicked man, or was, and always had been a magician or soothsayer. Some few are of the former opinion, but the generality of the fathers, and most celebrated interpreters, as far as I have had occasion to know, look upon him as having always been an impious magician as well as most wicked man. Be this, however, as it may, it cannot be called in question, that if ever he had been a servant of God, and a prophet of the Most High, he was not so when sent for by the king of Moab, for the scripture expressly calls

him a "soothsayer;"* and, moreover, his building seven altars, and ordering a set number of victims on each, were acts of idolatry and superstition, done on the high places of Baal, in his honour, and with a view to obtain knowledge from him by such enchantments. Hence, in the Book of Numbers, chap. xxiv. ver. 1, they are expressly called "enchantments," and Balaam is said to have given them up in despair; because, instead of meeting what he wanted from them, he found God always opposed him, and was determined to bless Israel; and, besides, wherever he is mentioned in other parts of scripture, he is always spoken of with horror and detestation, as one of the worst of men.† And yet we find that he not only was inspired by God to pronounce a solemn benediction upon the people of Israel, but also to make a most solemn prophecy of the Messiah, and to foretell the future fate of several of the people in that country.

The next example that occurs is that of Saul, of whom we are told, that he was filled with a prophetic spirit, and prophesied with the other prophets,‡ not only when he was in friendship with God, and innocent, but also afterwards, when he was cast off by God for his sins; nay, when he had formed the very resolution to kill David, an innocent person, and had sent several parties for that purpose, and afterwards went out to execute it himself, not only the people he had sent, but also he himself, when he went, was at that very time filled with

the prophetic spirit, and prophesied.§

The third example is that of Judas, who, though "he was a thief," and Christ knew from the beginning that he "should betray him," yea, and upon a certain occasion said of him that he was a devil; ** yet, notwith standing all this, he sent him out with the rest on their

^{*} Jos. xiii. 22. † See 2 Pet. ii. 14, 15; and Jude, ver. 11.

^{† 1} Sam. xi. 10. § 1 Sam. xix. 23. John xii. 6. ¶ John vi 64.

^{**} Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now he spake of Judas Iscariot.—vi. 7.

mission, and gave him, as well as them, the power of working miracles, of which the gospel gives this account: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases; and he commanded them, saying, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils," etc.*

The fourth example is that of Caiaphas, who, though a most wicked man, and at that very time plotting the destruction of Jesus Christ, yet even then prophesied the necessity of his death for the salvation of the whole world.

Besides, our blessed Saviour himself says expressly, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then I shall profess to them I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Lastly, St. Paul evidently supposes the power of working miracles even in wicked men void of charity, when he says, "Though I should have all faith so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

XXVIII. Let us now consider and examine the several examples and passages of scripture, and see what conclusion can be drawn from them. And, first, with regard to Balaam: nothing is more common in the holy scripture than to find Almighty God turning the impiety of wicked men against themselves, either for the more effectual convincing them of their error, or for the greater exaltation of his servants; and in these cases, as the royal prophet says, "He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, and maketh the devices of the people of none effect." In the case before us, Balak wanted Balaam, by his enchantments, to imprecate ruin and destruction on the people of God; Balaam was most desirous of complying

^{*} Matth. x. 1, etc.

^{‡ 1} Cor. xiii.

[†] Ibid. vii. 22. § Psal. xxxiii. 10.

with the king's request, and accordingly had recourse to his charms and incantations for this purpose; but Almighty God, whose chosen people Israel was, interposed in their behalf, disappointed all the effects of Balaam's enchantments, and instead of allowing the devil to assist him as he wished for, sent his own angel in his place, to let Balaam know the impossibility of what he desired, to reprove his avarice and impiety, and to put words in his mouth concerning Israel quite the reverse of what Balak wanted; for "the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, BETURN UNTO BALAK, AND THUS THOU SHALT SPEAK."* And again, when a second attempt was made, "The Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, go again unto Balak, and speak thus." Now, these words, which the angel here put in his mouth, were not only a solemn benediction of Israel, but also a prediction of what was to be done in future ages by their posterity, against the people of Balak and their neighbours, in just punishment of their impiety, for having joined with him against the people of God; for in the passage where that prediction is made, as well as in the last benediction of Israel, Balaam declares, that what he is about to say are the words that he had heard: "He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty," etc. And again, "he hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the visions of the Almighty."§ From these observations, it would appear, that Balaam was not properly God's instrument in working a miracle, but rather the subject on whom the miracle was wrought, being forced by God, in direct opposition to his own will and desire, to bless the people of God, and to relate the evils that were to come upon these nations in after-ages, as the angel had declared to him, in punishment of Balak for his evil mind against God's people; and, consequently, it cannot be drawn

^{*} Num. xxiii. 5. ‡ Chap. xxiv. ver. 4.

[†] Ver. 16. § Ver. 16.

from this example, that Almighty God ever makes use of wicked men, living openly in disgrace with him, as

instruments of working miracles.

XXIX. With regard to St. Paul, it must be observed, first, That the word prophecy does not always in scripture imply the foretelling things to come, nor by prophets is always understood those who foretell such things; but by prophets is often meant those who are deputed to sing the praises of God, or sets of religious men who lived together by themselves, and were employed in that office, and who celebrated the divine praises both by their voices and various kinds of musical instruments. The hill of God, where Saul met with a company of these men, was probably so called from their residing on it: and Samuel foretold him that he would there meet them. with psaltery, and pipe, and harp before them.* This will further appear by what is related elsewhere, "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers, with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel, and of his brethren Asaph the son of Berechiah." Now, this employment of theirs is in another part of scripture expressly called prophesying; "Moreover, David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should PROPHESY WITH HARPS, AND PSALTERIES, AND CYMBALS:" And again, § of the sons of Asaph, it is said, that they were "under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king;" where it is evident that the word prophecy cannot mean the foretelling future things, which neither the king could command, nor any one do at his command, but must signify the celebrating the praises of God, for which they were appointed. Hence, then, we may observe, secondly, That when Saul met with a

^{* 1} Sam. x. 5.

t Chap. xxv. 1.

^{† 1} Chron. xv. 16, 17. § Ver. 2.

company of these holy men, and is said to have prophesied with them, it is only meant that Almighty God filled him with an extraordinary affection of piety and devotion, which made him forget all worldly concerns, and join these good people in singing the praises of God, as it were in an ecstatic manner, as they did, in which there was certainly no miracle wrought by Saul; but if it was miraculous at all, the miracle was done in him by the change which the Holy Ghost wrought in his heart, and which is not more wonderful than what is done every day in the conversion of wicked men to a good life. We must observe, thirdly, That as the second time this happened to Saul was when he was in a sinful state, and actually entertained the very resolution of committing a most grievous sin, so the whole conduct of Almighty God on this occasion shows both the infinite care which he has over his servants, and his earnest desire for the conversion of sinners, which were the ends he had in view in what occurred. determined upon the death of David, no sooner heard that he was at Najoth with Samuel and the prophets, than he sent a party to take him; but immediately upon their arrival they were filled with devotion, and forgetting the message given them by the king, joined with the rest and "prophesied," that is, sung the praises of God; the king hearing this, sent a second and a third party, to whom the same thing happened in like manner. Here Almighty God manifested his power to Saul, which ought to have convinced him how vain it was for him to fight against God, or think to destroy David whom God protected, and had decreed should succeed him in the kingdom. Saul, blinded by his passion, never thought of that, but went himself in person to have David destroyed; but when he came nigh the place, God was pleased to work the same change in him, and even in a more extraordinary manner than in his guards, by divesting him for a time of all his fury against David, and exciting him to join the rest in celebrating the divine praises. From all which it is evident, that whatever

there was of miraculous in this change, Saul was only the subject on whom it was wrought; and as his prophesying did not consist in foretelling things to come, which would indeed be miraculous, but only in singing the praises of God, so it is plain, he was by no means made use of by Almighty God as an instrument of working any miracle at all, in the sense in which we have explained that word, and in which it is naturally understood.

XXX. The next case mentioned above is that of Judas, concerning whom it is certain, first, That he was at last a most impious man, and died a reprobate; secondly, That Jesus Christ knew from the beginning what he would do, and how he should die; thirdly, That, in conjunction with the other apostles, he received the commission and power of working miracles when he was sent with them to preach the approach of the kingdom of heaven, and prepare the people for receiving our blessed Saviour, and there is no reason to doubt but that he exercised that power as well as the rest of his brethren. So much is certain concerning him; but it does not appear evident from the sacred writings, that Judas was actually a bad man, living a bad life, and at enmity with God, when he was called by Jesus Christ to the apostleship, and received on that occasion the power of working miracles; for, according to the sacred chronologists, they were sent on their mission invested with that power, shortly after their vocation; and, consequently, all that can be concluded with certainty from his case, is, that though he was used by God as an instrument in working miracles, yet he afterwards became a reprobate; but it is by no means certain that he actually was a bad man, and in disgrace with God when he received and exercised that power. Nay, it seems much more reasonable to conclude, that at first he was not a bad man, as it is scarcely to be supposed that Jesus Christ would have chosen a man actually leading a bad life, and raised nim up to so high a dignity as an apostle, and bestowed such powers upon him. At least, if he was then a wicked man, it must only have been in the dispositions of his

heart, and not at all in his outward conduct and actions; for no such thing is laid to his charge in the gospel; and as our Saviour's enemies reproached him, that he kept company with publicans and sinners, they undoubtedly would have cried out much more against him, had one of his own disciples been of that class. All that follows, then, from the case of Judas in this supposition, is, that the ministers of the church, whose office is to preach the gospel, acting in that quality, may receive the power of working miracles, when the confirmation of their mission, or of the truths they preach, requires it for the good of others, whilst they themselves live without reproach in the eyes of the world, even though they should be bad men in their hearts and in the sight of God, and end at

last in reprobation.

XXXI. The case of Caiaphas comes next to be considered, which is thus related in the gospel: "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? for this man doth many miracles: if we let him thus alone, all men will believe in him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation: And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high-priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not: And this spake he not of himself, but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation," etc. Now, from this account of the gospel, it appears at first sight, first, That what Caiaphas said was, in its natural signification, a consequence of the preceding deliberation of the coun--cil, and the wicked dispositions of their hearts against Jesus Christ; all alleged the danger, both for themselves and their nation, of letting him alone: Caiaphas therefore concluded, that it was expedient he should die. Secondly, That Caiaphas himself had no knowledge of the prophetic meaning of his words, and was exceeding

^{*} John xi, 47, etc.

far from intending them in that sense. Thirdly, That the Holy Ghost prompted him to express his opinion in such words as might at the same time signify both what he maliciously intended against our Saviour, and what A'mighty God designed, in foretelling his death for the sulvation of mankind. Fourthly, that this was done solely in consequence of his character of high-priest, and not out of regard to his person: For, as the holy fathers in general explain it, "God conferred the gift of prophesy [at that time] on the priesthood, not on the individ-ual."* Fifthly, That it does not appear from the scrip-ture that Caiaphas was at this time a bad man as to his moral character in the eyes of the people, nor looked upon in that light by them; for the horrid crime he was guilty of with regard to Jesus Christ, was proposed to the people out of zeal for the cause of God and for His law. Sixthly, That of consequence Caiaphas, a wicked man and open enemy of Jesus Christ, was no more an instrument in the hand of God in pronouncing this prophecy, than the ass was in pronouncing Balaam's correction and reproof; that is, was nothing but a mere material instrument. From all which, however, it follows, that the sacred character of the priesthood may be a sufficient motive to induce Almighty God to make use of his ministers as instruments in working miracles for his own glory or the good of others, even though they be wicked men themselves in his sight, provided their wickedness does not appear in the eyes of the world.

XXXII. If now we take a view of what our Saviour says,† "That many shall say unto him in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?" etc., we must observe that though these people died in disgrace with God, and will be for ever cut off from him, notwith-standing they had in their life-time wrought miracles in his name; yet the scripture does not say that they were actually wicked men and open sinners when they

^{*} Prophetiæ dom m eo tempore non homini, sed sacerdotio concessit Deus. † Matth. vii. 22.

wrought these miracles. Their having done these miracles in his name shows they had the true faith, and were members of his church; and we find, from the example of the sons of Scava, that those who have not the true faith, and are not members of the church, though they pretend to work miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, not only cannot perform any, but expose themselves to no small danger by attempting it.* Now, if those persons of whom our Saviour here speaks had the true faith, and if there appears nothing in scripture to prove they were actually vicious men when they wrought these miracles, we may charitably suppose they were then good men, although afterwards they fell into sin, and died reprobate and impenitent; and, in this supposition, our Saviour's words have their full force, in showing us, that true piety, such as will bring us to heaven, does not con-· sist either in any outward exercises of devotion alonesuch as prayer, of which he declares in the preceding verse, that, "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;"-nor even in any of those extraordinary graces which are given, not for the sanctification of those who have them, but for the good of others, such as the gift of miracles; for that many who have had those gifts will at last be damned; but that it consists in doing the will of God in all things; for, "he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." trne, indeed, the answer which our Saviour tells us he will give to those people, is, "I never knew you,"which seems to imply that they had always been bad men. But this consequence is not just; for as it is certain that they had the true faith of Christ and were Christians, they must have been in the state of grace and friendship with God, at least till they had lost their baptismal innocence. Besides, it appears shocking to Chrisrian piety to suppose that Jesus Christ would make use persons who had always been impious men and his

^{*} See Acts xix. 13, et seq.

enemies, as instruments in his hands of working so many and great miracles as are here mentioned. Wherefore the words "I never knew you," can only signify that knowledge of approbation and love which Jesus Christ has of those who he foresees will, by persevering in his favour, be his for ever, and of whom he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."* With this knowledge it is certainly true that Christ never knew those that perish, though in their former life they had been far advanced in perfection, and even so as to work miracles and prophesy. What I have here advanced tends only to show, that if we only consider the words of scripture, as they lie in the passage we have before us, there does not appear any certainty from it that those of whom our Saviour here speaks were actually in the state of sin, much less that they were openly wicked men, when they performed the miracles here related; and, consequently, that this passage is not a full and direct proof that God ever does make use of such wicked men as instruments in working miracles.

XXXIII. The last passage from St. Paul, where he says, "Though I should have all faith, so as to remove mountains, I am nothing," † plainly supposes that that strong faith on which the gift of miracles is founded, may be in such as are void of charity, and in disgrace with God; and in this sense it is commonly understood by the

holy fathers and sacred interpreters.

XXXIV. To come now to the application of all the above reflections, we must notice two distinct questions: First, Whether the gift of miracles can be bestowed on wicked men, who notoriously lead bad lives, in disgrace with God? Secondly, Whether Almighty God actually does sometimes make use of such agents to work miracles?

XXXV. With regard to the first question, the solution is very easy. The power of miracles is a free gift

of God. It is not due to any merit on the part of him who receives it, nor is it necessary for his own immediate sanctification, or given for that end, but for the good of others—for the manifestation and confirmation of the truth; and therefore there appears no reason to suppose, that this power cannot be, in certain circumstances, bestowed even on wicked men; that is, that Almighty God may not, if he pleases, work true miracles, even by means of wicked men, when, his own glory and the good of souls can be promoted thereby. Some of the above texts of scripture strongly insinuate that this may be sometimes done, and the holy fathers and many other interpreters unanimously acknowledged it. But as to the second question, to wit, Whether Almighty God in fact does make use of wicked men, known to be such, as his instruments in working miracles? To this I answer, First, That according to the ordinary course of the laws of providence, this is very seldom, if ever the case.— Secondly, That there is scarcely one positive proof from scripture that this in fact is ever done. Thirdly, That there are several very strong reasons of congruency which show why God (except in some very singular and extraordinary circumstances) should not do so .-Now, these reasons are, first, because true miracles not only convince us of the truth of that doctrine in proof of which they are performed, but also naturally impress in the mind a strong sense of veneration for the person who performs them, and persuades us of his power with God. Now it does not seem very congruous to the divine wisdom and goodness, to bestow upon persons openly vicious a gift which naturally tends to make oth ers esteem and reverence them as his friends. Secondly, The gift of miracles naturally procures authority to the person who has it; and, therefore, were it bestowed on men openly wicked, even in a few instances, it might enable them, by afterwards appealing to these miracles, to impose upon the many, and lead them on to wicked-Thirdly, The openly known vicious lives of wicked men, could not fail to detract exceedingly from

the authority of any miracles performed by them, and leave a strong suspicion in the mind that their miracles were not true, but either fictitious or the work of Satan, and not of God. For, as miracles give a double lustre to virtue and sanctity, so a holy and virtuous life exceedingly confirms and enhances the authority of miracles; and it does not seem very congruous that the Divine Wisdom should, except in some very extraordinary instance, deprive miracles of the great advantage and force they receive from the sanctity of the person who performs them, and which makes them the more effectually procure the ends intended by them. I answer, fourthly, that if at any time Almighty God makes use of wicked men to perform miracles, this is only done under the following conditions, as far as can be deduced from scripture, in the examples of Judas and Caiaphas: When the person performing the miracle is, first, himself a true believer, though a wicked man; for, if not a true believer, no miracle will be performed, though attempted even in the name of Jesus, as we see in the sons of Scæva: Secondly, Adorned with the character of a public minister of God, as Judas and Caiaphas were; and then the power is granted to the character, not the person, as is expressly taken notice of in the case of Caiaphas: Thirdly, That though wicked men in the sight of God, yet that they do not appear as such in the eyes of the world; for, as we have seen above, there seems no proof, from scripture, that any such were ever used by God as instruments of working miracles: Fourthly, When the end of these miracles is solely to confirm or discover the truths of God.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE AUTHORITY OF MIRACLES.

I. WE now come to treat of a subject which is of th highest importance, and therefore deserves more partic ular accuracy and attention. The enemies of the Chris tian religion leave no means untried, in order to vilify and enervate the force of the arguments from miracles which are used in its favour. From its first commencement they have never failed to raise their batteries against that impregnable fortress, and used every engine in their power to overturn it; but always without success, and generally to their own confusion. Sometimes they have endeavoured to disprove the possibility of miracles, and being foiled there, they have attacked their actual existence; finding this would not do, they have had recourse to the vain pretence that it is impossible to prove their existence; but seeing the fort impregnable on that side also, they have sought to shelter their impiety in the weak plea of denying their authority;—vainly pretending, with an air of triumph, that though the existence of miracles should be acknowledged, they cannot prove the truth of any doctrine, both because miracles have been alleged and wrought in proof of opposite doctrines, and also because, according to Christian writers even those of the first note—the sanctity of the doctrine taught is given as a criterion by which to judge of, and prove the truth of the miracle wrought in its favour.— This point, therefore, must be particularly considered, and the objections brought against the authority of miracles carefully examined. But first I must premise a few observations which will serve to show the true state of the question in its proper point of view, and at the same time to preclude several of the infidel's objections

I. First, then, we must observe, that what Mr. Hume al ges in his Essav against Miracles,* "That a miracle may be discoverable by men or not; but that this alters not its nature or essence," is not true in the Christian idea of a miracle; for, as a miracle is an extraordinary effect produced in the material creation, which material creation is essentially the natural object of our senses. every extraordinary effect produced in it must of course be in itself discoverable by us, whether we in fact do discover it or not. It is true, indeed, the Christian religion proposes to us, as objects of our faith, several operations proper to Almighty God, which are not at all discoverable by our senses; such as, the incarnation of the Son of God; the union of the divine and human natures in one person; the conception of Jesus Christ in his mother's womb without her having the knowledge of man, and the like. But it is certain that the Christian world never looked upon these as miracles, in the ordinary and proper sense of that word; and, if we consider them attentively we shall find that they can no more be classed with miracles than the creation of the world at the beginning, or the daily creation of the soul of man and uniting it to the body. These also are operations of the almighty hand of God, above the power of all created agents to perform; but it is plain they do not enter into our idea of a mira-The above truths do not fall under our senses; we know them only by revelation; they are the objects of our faith, the mysteries which the Christian religion proposes to our belief, but they are not miracles. However. if Mr. Hume, or any other person, chooses to call them miracles, I have no objection; but such kind of miracles can have no authority as proofs; their revelation and reality must be proved, like the other truths of Christianity, by iniracles properly so called, according to the explication we have given of them; miracles which are of their own nature discoverable by men, and fall under our senses.

^{*} Page 182 [in the note].

Secondly, If the miracle proposed be evidently a relative miracle, or such as can be performed by creatures, whether good or bad, of a nature superior to man; or if there be any solid reason to suspect it is so, or that it may, perhaps, be only the effect of natural causes; such

miracle can never serve as a proof of any doctrine, without further evidence; nor make that impression upon the mind which the persuasion of its being a true miracle naturally and necessarily does; because the suspicion in this case must always remain in the mind, that perhaps the thing done is owing to natural causes, and is no miracle at all; or that perhaps it is the work of Satan, and not of God. It is, therefore, only such miracles as are known to be from God, and performed either by himself, or by his holy angels commissioned and authorized by him, that can be used as having authority in

proof of any doctrine.

Thirdly, We have seen above, that true miracles, by a certain natural but powerful efficacy, make a deep impression on the mind, excite a more lively sense of the divine presence, and produce several other valuable effects in the hearts both of those who receive benefit by them, and of those who come to know them, such as veneration and reverence towards God, love and gratitude for the favours received, confidence in his goodness, fear of offending, and the like. Now, the present inquiry is not how far, or by what means miracles are capable of producing these affections in the heart of man; -this is a fact which is known by experience, and is not called in question; - but, as we have seen above, that some of the principal ends intended by Almighty God from miracles were to convince mankind of the divine commission of those whom he sends to inform them of his will, or to prove that the doctrine proposed by such teachers is divine doctrine, or to defend any tenet formerly revealed and believed to be from God, when at any time afterwards it comes to be denied or called in question; hence, the present inquiry is precisely this, How far true miracles are a sufficient and rational proof to convince the

world of the truth of any of these three points, and how

great is the authority they have for this purpose?

Fourthly, With regard to the nature of the doctrine to be proved by miracles, we must carefully observe, that this kind of proof is not intended to convey a clear and distinct idea of the different parts of the doctrine proposed, or of their mutual connexions and relations with one another, as is the case with those proofs which are drawn from the internal evidence of any doctrine. Strictly speaking, the authority of the proof drawn from miracles does not fall directly upon the doctrine itself, but precisely and immediately falls upon its revelation; for the immediate object which this kind of proof has in view is to show that the doctrine proposed is revealed by God. The truth of the doctrine, however, is no less certain on this account, but rather more so; because, as it is absolutely impossible, and evidently repugnant to the very idea we have of God, to suppose that he can ever assert, authorize or propagate a falsehood, so if the authority of miracles can prove, to full conviction, that the doctrine attested by them is a doctrine revealed by God himself, it must follow, as an incontestable consequence, that that doctrine is essentially true.

Fifthly, All those natural truths which can be known and proved by the light of reason, and which the human understanding is capable of comprehending, do not stand in need of divine revelation to convince mankind that they are true; and therefore neither are they, strictly speaking, the proper objects of this proof from miracles. I do not say that Almighty God may not, if he pleases, make even natural truths the subject of revelation, to discover them to mankind more clearly than natural unassisted reason can do, or to give us a greater conviction and certainty of them; but that, strictly speaking, they do not stand in need of this proof in order to convince mankind of their reality. The proper objects of this proof from miracles, are either such supernatural truths as exceed the comprehension of the mind of man, and cannot absolutely be known to us or proved to exist, except

by revelation; or they are positive institutions of the divine will, requiring our obedience, but which, as they depend solely on the divine pleasure, it is impossible we should have any idea of them, unless he make them known to us.

III. From these observations the precise state of the present question about the authority of miracles naturally flows; for here we see that the miracles required in this proof are only such as are certainly from God, either performed immediately by himself or by agents commissioned by him. This at once cuts off the objection that miracles have been performed in proof of opposite doctrines, as it is evidently impossible that God can perform miracles in attestation of falsehood. Hence, in such a contest as that between Moses and the Egyptian magicians, the miracles on the one side cannot be from God, and therefore not true miracles, but lying signs of Satan, by which no one need be deceived but such as are willing to be so: For Almighty God is bound by his own divine perfections to hinder such delusions from being undiscoverable, as we shall see at large when explaining the criterion. From the above observations we also see what kind of doctrines stand in need of this proof from miracles; and these are either the divine commission of such as are sent by God to communicate his will to man, or such supernatural truths concerning God and spiritual things, as are in themselves incomprehensible to the human understanding, and undiscoverable by natural reason; or, in fine, such positive institutions as God may be pleased to appoint, and requires us to receive and observe. This obviates the objections drawn from the incomprehensibility of the doctrine, since it is chiefly such doctrines that stand in need of this proof: Wherefore, the precise state of the question is, Whether miracles known to be performed by God, or by angels commissioned by him, in order to prove any of these points, be a just and rational proof to convince mankind, that they are in reality truths of God, revealed by him? This is the subject of our present inquiry, and the light of reason, as well

as the Christian religion, clearly shows, that such miracles as we have mentioned are a full, convincing and irrefragable proof of the divine revelation of the doctrines for which they are wrought, and oblige all those to whom these doctrines are so proved, to receive them as divine truths stamped with the seal of heaven and attest-

ed by God himself.

IV. I begin by considering what the light of reason teaches us concerning this question. The principles by which our reason is guided in this matter are taken from the very idea we have of the Supreme Being, as a Being of infinite perfections, we evidently see, that, as God is infinitely good, it is impossible he can directly concur or employ is almighty power in defence of a lie, to the inevitable delusion of his rational creatures; whom he loves so much, and whose happiness he has so much at heart. As he is infinitely true and holy, it is impossible he should ever attest, authorize, or propagate lies and falsehood: he must essentially love truth, and this love of truth must be incompatible with the love of falsehood: As he is infinitely wise, he can never act against himself; either by employing his power against his own veracity, holiness, or wisdom; or by depriving himself of the most apt external means of convincing mankind of whatever he thinks proper to make known to them. These are principles which are evident to the light of reason, and essentially connected with our idea of a supreme and infinitely perfect Being. Now, to come to our case, let us suppose that a person appears in the world, declaring that he is sent from this Supreme Being, and commissioned by him to instruct mankind in his divine will, and appeals to God himself to attest his being thus sent and commissoned: In this case, how is it possible for Almighty God to give the attestation required to fully satisfy his rational creatures and exclude all suspicion of delusion? It is plain, there are no external means by which he can do so, but by exerting his omnipotence and performing miracles. And it is no less evident, that this attestation he never can give,

if the person who appeals to it in proof of his being sent by God, be not in fact sent and commissioned by nim. Miracles, in such a case as this, are the voice of God attesting that what his servant says is true; they are the broad seal of heaven authenticating the commission given by God to those whom he sends as his ambassadors to men, and which a God of goodness and truth can never possibly give where the commission is not true and real. Let us suppose again, that this person proposes a doctrine unheard of heretofore, and unknown, but which he pretends he had by revelation from God, with orders to teach it to men, and appeals again to the same divine attestation in proof that it was so. It is evident, that it this new doctrine was not revealed to him by God, it is impossible God should ever work any miracles in attestation of its being so; for this as well as in the former case, would evidently be to attest a lie, to authorize a falsehood, to exert his power against his own sanctity, and thereby positively concur to the deception and delusion of his creatures; and, in fine, render precarious and useless the only proper external means of convincing mankind of what he requires of them. Let us suppose, in the third place, that any received point of doctrine believed to have been originally revealed by God, is called in question or denied, and that in defence of its revelation, appeal is made to God, as in the two preceding cases, to attest it by miracles; it is as clear as noonday, that if it was not revealed, Almighty God cannot give the required attestation of its being so, without falling into the same contradictory and absurd consequences -noticed above. Hence, it is evident, that if it be known that Almighty God works a miracle, in order to attest either the commission of his servants, or the revelation of the doctrines they propose or defend, it must be admitted as a full and absolute proof of the veracity of the commission and of the revelation of the doctrine: And observe, that though the divine attestation by miracles should be denied- -which may sometimes happen, as we shall afterwards see more fully in the last of the three

suppositions above mentioned; and though this denial considered merely in itself—is not a full proof that the contested doctrine is false, because God is not always obliged to work miracles when required, in defence of doctrines which have formerly been sufficiently revealed; vet, when he is pleased, in any of the above cases, actually to work the miracle in attestation of the doctrine, it is then absolutely impossible, and utterly inconsistent with the divine perfections, that the doctrines so attested should not be from God; and consequently, the authority of miracles in proof of doctrine, as above explained, is absolute and conclusive. All the above reasoning may be well illustrated by a parallel case among men.— When a person is sent as an ambassador from one kingdom to another, he must have his credentials properly authenticated before he can be received in that character by the king to whom he is sent. This is done by a commission signed and sealed by the king his master, and importing, that he is sent and authorized by him to declare his mind to the other king concerning the affairs to be treated of between them, and requiring all due regard to be had to what he shall so declare. dentials are an absolute proof that this ambassador is actually sent and commissioned by his master, and procures all necessary credit to what he says in his master's name. But as there is a possibility that an ambassador so commissioned may sometimes go beyond his commission, and do or say things in his master's name for which he is not authorized by him; if he should at any time make some very extraordinary, and, in appearance, most unreasonable demand, the credentials he has first shown will not so far give a sanction to his words, but that on such an occasion his veracity may be called in question; if, then, he should produce another commission, signed and sealed as the former, and actually authorizing him to make the same demand in his master's name; this will effectually secure him from all suspicion of fraud, and prove to conviction, that his demand, however extraordinary or unreasonable, was not an invention of his own,

but expressly enjoined him by the king his master .-The application to our case is perfectly obvious. God Almighty makes choice of some faithful servant to whom he reveals his will, and sends him as his ambassador to declare the same to men; he appears among them, declares his commission from God, and appeals to the miracles which God works by his means, and at his desire, as the credentials of his mission—as proofs of his being sent by him. These miracles, therefore, are the signature of God, the seal of heaven, by which this person's commission is authenticated, and which necessarily procures for him due veneration as to an ambassador from God, and just credit and regard to all he says. But we shall suppose that, among the doctrines he teaches, he at last proposes some things very extraordinary, and not only hitherto unheard of, but which appear incomprehensible and seemingly contradictory, which, however, he declares he received from God, and to which he requires their entire submission. They are at a stand -they hesitate-they begin to suspect. "He is sent from God (say they), we cannot doubt of it; but he is a man, and perhaps in these things goes beyond his orders; it is true, it does not seem consistent with the goodness of God to give his divine attestation to prove that any teacher is sent by him to the world, and yet permit him, under the sanction of his character, to teach falsehood; out, on the other hand, though this man has proved beyond dispute that he is sent by God to declare his will to man, yet these points which he proposes are so shockng, and in appearance so contrary to common sense, that we know not what to think of the matter." If, to emove their doubts, and extricate them out of this dilemma, their teacher should produce another commission of the same nature as the former, signed and sealed like it with the finger of God; that this, if he should again have recourse to miracles to attest that these very points at which they are startled were actually revealed by God to him, and if God should accordingly work the miracles demanded for that purpose, this must immedi-

ately dissipate all their doubts, and effectually convince them, not only that this person was sent from God, but that these very incomprehensible doctrines which he teaches were the truths of God, revealed by him to his servant, and which, therefore, it is their bounden duty to receive with all submission and veneration. In fact, we find this is what Almighty God has done: Jesus Christ appears in Judea, and represents himself as a teacher sent by God; yea, as the great Prophet so long expected to be the Saviour of the world. St. John the Baptist being then in prison, and hearing of his fame, sends two of his disciples to inquire if he was the Messias; the answer he gives them, is an appeal to his credentials, sealed by Almighty God, namely, the numberless incontrovertible miracles he daily wrought. Among the other doctrines which he taught, one article was, that he, as man, had received power from God to forgive sins upon earth; and he takes the following occasion to declare this to the people: "They brought to him a man sick of the palsy lying on a bed; and Jesus said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" immediately some of those present, who were best versed in the law, were startled at this doctrine, which, to them, appeared blasphemous; "and they reasoned in their own hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus Christ perceiving in spirit, what passed in their hearts, immediately produces new credentials to prove this very point, that he, as man, had received from God the power of forgiving sins, which he here exercised, and works two stupendous miracles for this purpose, first by showing them that he knew all that was passing in their hearts; "Why do ye reason these things in your hearts?" says he; and then by a single word restores the sick man in an instant to perfect health: "That ye may know," says he, "That the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way unto thy house; and immediately he arose, took up the bed, and

went forth before them all." This was enough, all murmurs ceased, the people present "were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, we never saw it in this fashion,"* or, as St. Matthew expresses it, "They glorified God

that had given such power unto men."+

V. Other examples, to the same purpose, might be brought forward, but the above are sufficient for illustrating our present subject. I shall only further observe here, that the learned author of the Dissertation on Mira. cles against Hume, seems to have done great injustice to his cause, and exceedingly weakened the authority of the proof from miracles, by the manner in which he pretends to account for the connection between any doctrine and the miracles wrought in attestation of it. He supposes a man of an unblemished character to advance doctrines in religion unknown before, but not in themselves apparently impious or absurd; and to affirm, at the same time, that they were revealed to him by the Spirit of God. "It must be owned," says the doctor, "there is a very strong presumption against the truth of what he says; this presumption does not arise from any doubt of the man's integrity, for we suppose him of an unblemished character; nor does it arise from any absurdity or immoral tendency we perceive in the doctrine itself; for we suppose it has none such; but it ariseth principally, if not solely, from these two circumstances, the extreme uncommonness of such a revelation, and the great facility with which people of strong fancy may in this particular impose upon themselves." He then supposes, further, that this man pretends to have also received from God the power of working miracles; and observes, that "we have precisely the same presumption against his being endued with such a power, as against his having obtained such a revelation; two things," says he, "are asserted, and there is one presumption, and but one, against them, and it equally affects them both; whatever proves either assertion, removes the only presumption which hinders

[•] Mark ii.

our belief of the other." He then lastly supposes, that the man actually works the miracles before us, and consequently removes this only presumption, and thereby manifests a divine communication, upon which he concludes thus, "We have now all the evidence which the integrity of the person could give us, as to any ordinary event attested by him, that the doctrine he delivers as from God, is from God, and therefore true." So that according to this hypothesis, miracles give no other certainty of the divine original and revelation of the doctrines in proof of which they are wrought, than the word of an honest man! It is true, indeed, our author goes on, and affirms that, in the case he has proposed, "we have more evidence of the revelation than for any common fact vouched by a person of undoubted probity; because," says he, "as God is both almighty and allwise. if he hath bestowed on any so uncommon a privilege [as that of working miracles], it is highly probable that it is bestowed for promoting some end uncommonly important; and what more important end than to reveal to men that which may be conducive to their present and eternal happiness?" I leave this "highly probable" argument to have as much force as it may, and only observe that, after all this flourish, and answering an objection that might be alleged against it, our author himself seems to lay very little stress upon it; for thus, after all, he draws his final conclusion: "And now the connection between the miracle and the doctrine is obvious; the miracle removes the improbability of a supernatural communication, of which communication it is in fact an irrefragable evidence. 'This improbability, which was the only obstacle, being removed, the doctrine hath, at least, all the evidence of a common fact, attested by a man of known virtue and good sense."* I shall not say whether this connection, as it is here explained, will appear so obvious to a Deist as the learned author would have us believe; but this I think is pretty evident, that

See Dissertation on Miracles, Part ii. Sec. 3.

the explication he has here given of it will render mita cles of no manner of use to the Christian religion; for. in the first place, the Christian religion proposes to ou: belief doctrines which most certainly did appear absurd to the heathen world at its first appearance; for the world of God assures us that the doctrine of the Cross "is a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles." In the second place, these doctrines, to this day, appear most absurd and contradictory to Deists and unbelievers—a. numerous and learned body, who, for this very reason, most impiously ridicule and reject them. Thirdly, The apostles, who first taught these doctrines to the world, and wrought miracles in confirmation of them, were so far from being "men of known virtue and good sense," that they were absolute strangers in every country intowhich they went when they first proposed these doctrines; and in their own country itself they were men of no character, of no learning, of the lowest class of people, and without any earthly qualification to recommend them. So that the Deist or Atheist may admit the argument of our learned author, and yet persist in denying the Christian revelation, because the case he supposes is certainly unconnected both with its doctrines and the persons who first taught them to the world. In fact, the whole argumentation of our author is a mere fictitious hypothesis, dressed in good language, and of course very apt to impose upon the reader's imagination; but in reality more calculated to undermine Christianity than to support it, because absolutely contrary to fact. Can its author produce one single instance wherein his hypothesis ever existed! Can he show any one example wherein those who were present when miracles were wrought, ever dreamed of making that long winding process of arguments which he describes, and at last rested satisfied that the sublime incomprehensible doctrines proposed, must be from God, merely because he who declared them was an honest man! No, no; miracles go more quickly to work, and make a more immediate and convincing impression upon the heart of man.

Those whom Almighty God sends to declare his will to man, and by whom he works miracles to confirm what they declare, appeal to the miracles they work as the voice of God himself attesting the truth of what they teach; as the voice of God they are received by those who see them, and as such give them not a mere probability, as the dissertator pretends, but, as we have seen above, an absolute conviction that these doctrines are from God, which he himself so palpably attests to be so; and, consequently, the connection between the miracle and the revelation of the doctrine, is not a distant connection, which stands in need of intermediate steps to bring us to the knowledge of it, but it is a most immediate connection, such as are the credentials of an ambassador from his master, both giving him his commission to act as his ambassador, and also authorizing him to make those very demands and proposals which he makes to those to whom he is sent.

VI. But to return to my own subject: having shown, from the light of reason, the authority of miracles in proof of doctrine, I now proceed to show how great that authority is by proofs drawn from revelation. Proofs of this kind we find in great abundance throughout the sacred scriptures. For greater distinction, I shall consider separately the proofs drawn from the Old and New Testament, and to begin with those of the old law.

And, first, we see there that Almighty God himself appeals to miracles as the most undoubted and convincing proofs of the divine revelation of what he wants to communicate to his creatures. Thus, when he appeared to Moses in the wilderness, and gave him his commission to go to Egypt, and deliver his people from their slavery Moses was averse to undertake that charge, and proposed several objections on his part, which Almighty God properly answered. At last he proposed a difficulty on the part of the people, saying, "They will not believe me, nor hearken to my words; for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee;" upon which Almighty God immediately has recourse to miracles—performs

two before him—gives him the power of performing the same and others before the people as his credentials, and assures him they will have the desired effect in convincing the people that his commission is divine.* Now, would the Almighty God, a God of infinite wisdom, ever have given Moses the power of miracles, as an undoubted means to convince the people of his being sent by God, of miracles were not a most certain and undoubted proof of the doctrine for which they are performed? Here let

common sense judge and determine.

Secondly, At the time when the people of Israel were brought out of Egypt, idolatry had made an amazing progress in all the other nations, especially among the Egyptians, and the Israelites were exceedingly prone to follow the example of their neighbours in that respect. On the other hand, Almighty God had nothing more at heart than to preserve them from that abomination, and to convince them that he, and he alone, was the Sovereign Lord and God, and that besides him there was no God We cannot possibly doubt but that his sovereign wisdom would make use of means the most proper and best adapted for effectually convincing them of this truth, which he had so much at heart; and we find that the means he used for this purpose were the numberless miracles he performed among them. Thus God himself declares to Moses, that he had performed so many signs on Pharaoh, "that ye may know how that I am the Lord." And again, Moses recounting all the signs and wonders God had done, says to the people, "Unto thee it was shown, that that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else besides him." Hence, then, we must conclude, that miracles are a full and certain proof of the revelation of those doctrines for which they are wrought, seeing that God himself uses them as the most effectual means for that end.

Thirdly, We find that God acknowledges the working of true miracles to be the most undoubted proof,

[•] See Exod. iii. and iv. † Exod. x. 2. ‡ Deut. iv. 35.

that he who works them is God: Thus, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, he challenges all false gods to work, if they can, a true miracle in proof of their being gods, and acknowledges so great authority in such a proof, that he promises to receive them as gods if they do it: "Let them show us what shall happen," says he,* "show us the things that are to come, that we may know that ye are gods." Hence, then, true miracles are not only the work of God, but they are also the language of God, by which he speaks to men, and discovers to them his will; and as it is impossible for the devil to speak in this language, so it is impossible for Almighty God to use it in attestation of a falsehood; when, therefore, he speaks in this way in attestation of any doctrine proposed, it is a most decisive proof that that doctrine is from him, and

consequently most true.

Fourthly, We have another most convincing proof of this truth, founded on the divine justice. It is impossible for the divine justice to find fault where there is none, or punish where there is no crime. On the other hand, there can be no crime where there is no transgression of the law, nor can there be any transgression of the law, where the law is not sufficiently known. Consequently, wherever we find the divine justice rigorous in punishing, there, we may be assured, has been great transgression of the law, and the law fully manifested; now, of this we find most severe examples where the manifestation of the law depended solely upon miracles, and where the acting against so strong a proof of the law was alleged by God as a proof of the greatness of the crime. Whence it is manifest, that in the judgment of God miracles are a most authentic proof of the revelation of the divine will. Let us see, then, these examples. Moses appears before Pharaoh in the name of God, with an order to let the people of Israel go to the wilderness—a thing no less contrary to Pharaoh's interest than to his inclination. Certainly Pha-

^{*} Isaiah xli. 22, 23.

aoh was not obliged to take Moses' bare word for what he said; it was necessary he should give some decisive proof that he really was from God, and authorized by him to make such a demand. Moses has recourse immediately to miracles as his credentials, and as the most convincing proof that what he had said was true: Pharaoh, however, hardens his heart, and pays no regard to the divine command, notwithstanding this proof of its reality; but immediately the divine vengeance pursues him, and one severe punishment after another is inflicted on him and on his people, till at last he and all his host are drowned in the Red Sea, in punishment of their obstinacy. Now, I ask, where was Pharaoh's crime? Where was his transgression, which could deserve so dreadful and severe a punishment? Doubtless his crime consisted in refusing to obey the express command of God, delivered to him by Moses, and attested by miracles. But if miracles be not an absolute and decisive attestation of the will of God; if they can possibly be at any time connected with falsehood, or if they be not at all times an undoubted token and proof of the truth, then Pharaoh, notwithstanding the miracles, had no certainty of the divine will, and could not be justly blamed for not complying with it. But the conduct of God shows the weakness of this pretext; he most severely punished Pharaoh for not complying with his orders; and as it is impossible for the divine justice to punish crime more than it deserves, Pharaoh's crime in not complying must have been exceeding great, which could deserve from a just God such exemplary punishment. Hence, the divine will must have been fully manifested to him; and as the only proof he had of it was by means of the miracles wrought for that purpose, it folows as a most just and necessary consequence, that miracles constitute a full, perfect, and decisive proof of the divine will, which none can resist without resisting God himself. Another example, but still more express, to the same purpose, we have in the Book of Numbers, chapxiv when the people murmured against God upon hearing the report of the spies. Almighty God was so displeased with their infidelity, that he complains of it to Moses, and threatens to destroy them entirely, taking particular notice of the atrociousness of their crime, as arising from their not believing him, notwithstanding all the miracles he had wrought among them: -- "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? How long will it be ere they believe me, for ALL THE SIGNS WHICH I HAVE SHEWN among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them."* It is true, Almighty God by the interposition of Moses and his prayers, was pleased to remit this dreadful threat as to the whole nation, sparing the children and those under twenty years of age; but as for all above that age, except Joshua and Caleb, who had not consented to their crime, he was inexorable, and thus pronounces sentence upon them: "All those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; say you unto them, your carcases shall fall in the wilderness; your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness," etc. From the expressions here used, and from the severity of the punishment, we see how exceedingly God was offended at them, and we see that the great. cause of the offence of which he complains, was because they refused to believe and trust in him, notwithstanding the proof he had given them of his almighty power and goodness by repeated miracles; hence, therefore, it follows, that these miracles were a decisive proof of the truths for which they were wrought-a full and convincing evidence, which rendered those who refused to believe it altogether inexcusable before God, and provoked him to so great indignation; and upon the whole, we justly conclude, that true miracles wrought by God

^{*} Num. xiv. 11, 12

are in themselves a decisive proof of doctrine, an

authentic testimony of the divine approbation.

VII. In the New Testament also we find the same truth declared to us in the plainest and most convincing manner on several different occasions. Our Saviour had declared himself to the Jews, to be the Son of God, at which they took exceeding great offence, and "sought to kill him, for saying that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."* Upon this he endeavours by several arguments to explain to them his union and equality with the Father, and, as the proof of all he says, concludes thus:—"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true; there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true; ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth, but I receive not testimony from man-but I have a greater witness than that of John; for the works that the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me; and the Father himself that hath sent me hath borne witness of me." Here then we see our blessed Saviour declaring to the people a most sublime doctrine, far above all human comprehension, at which they were, upon that very account, greatly scandalized, namely, that he who, to all human appearance, was a mere man, whose parents and kindred they knew, was in reality the eternal Son of God, equal to his Father, having the same power, even so as to raise the dead, as the Father hath; that to him all judgment was committed by the Father, and He could not be dishonoured by any man without dishonouring the Father at the same time. To remove the scandal they had taken, and convince them that he was really sent by the Father to reveal this very truth to them, what proof does he bring? Why, no other than the miracles he performs; "the works," says he, "that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me."-He seeks no other proof but this; he prefers it before

the testimony of St. John the Baptist, and looks upon it as fully sufficient to convince them of the reality of his mission, and of the truth of his doctrine, though in itself so sublime, and so apparently presumptuous and false, that it was regarded by the Jews as blasphemous.

VIII. Upon another occasion, the Jews earnestly pressed him to tell them in plain terms if he was the Messias, and he again had recourse to the same proof, declaring it ought thoroughly to convince them that he was; "the Jews came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ve believed not; the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me;"* and a little after, he concludes, "I and my Father are one." Upon this the Jews were so highly scandalized, that they took up stones to stone him, as one guilty of blasphemy; "because," said they, "thou being a man makest thyself God."+ But he calmly appeals again to his miracles, as a most undoubted proof of the truth of what he had asserted: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that we may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." Here, again, we find the Son of God appealing to his works alone, which he declares to be the works of his Father, as the most authentic and decisive proof of his own godhead, that is, of the most important and fundamental article of the Christian religion. He rests entirely upon this proof; he seeks no other, looking upon this as the most satisfactory argument he can use to convince unprejudiced minds of the truth of his doctrine. Shall we then dare to arraign the wisdom of the Son of God ?-shall we dare assert that he made use of an improper or equivocal proof on so solemn and important an occasion? It would surely be the height of blasphemy, and we would be more blameable than the hard-hearted Jews them-

^{*} John x. 24, etc.

selves, if we did so; we must, therefore, conclude from these appeals of Jesus Christ to miracles in proof of his doctrine—that miracles wrought by God in attestation of the truth, are essentially and undoubtedly connected therewith, and consequently, that the authority of miracles, in proof of doctrine, is absolute and conclusive.

IX. The same truth also beautifully appears from what our Saviour answered to St. Philip in presence of the rest of the apostles, when Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus Christ expressed his surprise at this petition, which showed how little St. Philip had understood what his Master had often already told them about his divinity and union with the Father; and after explaining it to him again in a most amiable manner, he appeals in proof of the truth of what he had said, to his works, which ought fully to satisfy him on this head: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father; believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very work's sake."* In this most beautiful passage, where the Son of God condescends, with the most endearing mildness, to the weak ness of his disciple, we not only see another strong proof of the authority of miracles wrought in attestation of doctrines—even the most sublime and incomprehensible. but we also see explained to us, by Jesus Christ himself, the connection between the miracle wrought and the doctrine attested by it. "The words that I speak unto you," says he, "I speak not of myself;" I do not give you this doctrine as my own; it was revealed to me by God, and it is from him I declare it to you. But how shall we know that it is so? He immediately adds.

^{*} John xiv. 8, et seq.

the Father that dwelleth in me he doth the works;" these works done by him are his own signature, his own declaration that the doctrine I deliver is from him: He makes use of me as his ambassador to declare to you the doctrine, and he performs the works to attest that the doctrine is his; consequently, as it is absolutely impossible that the God of truth should attest a lie, miracles must be a full and decisive proof that the doctrines attested by them are the truths of God, and revealed by him. This argument is still further confirmed by the following testimony of St. John: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that

believing ve might have life through his name."*

X. But there is no expression of Jesus Christ which shows this truth in stronger colours, than when he condemns the obstinacy of the Jews as absolutely inexcusable, for not yielding to the blazing light of the truth, which he exhibited to them by the splendour of his doctrine and miracles "If I had not come and spoken unto them," says he, "they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin."† In these words the Jews are condemned as inexcusable for not receiving the doctrine of our Saviour; but surely they could not in justice have been so condemned for this fault, nor would it have been any fault at all, if Christ had not given them convincing and irrefragable proofs of the divinity both of his mission and doctrine. Now, we have seen above that the only proofs he had recourse to for that end, were upon all occasions the miracles he wrought among them; and therefore, a little after, he declares that the only cause of this their so severe condemnation was, that they had refused to yield to this divine light: "If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my

Father."* See here what it was that rendered them without all excuse in the sight of God. God the Father had manifested himself to them in the most sensible manner by the works which Jesus Christ wrought in his name; yet they obstinately shut their eyes against this divine light—hated Jesus Christ, who brought it among them, and consequently hated his Father also; therefore, they in their turn were rejected by him, and justly condemned as guilty of the most inexcusable obstinacy. But this condemnation would certainly have been unjust, if miracles were not the most incontestable proofs of doctrine. Shall we then say that their condemnation was unjust? God forbid. We must, therefore conclude that miracles are essentially connected with the revelation of the doctrines attested by them, and that their authority in proof of these doctrines is absolute and decisive.

XI. I shall not here repeat the appeal made by our Saviour to his miracles in proof of his being the Messiah,

when St. John's disciples questioned him if he was; nor his curing the man sick of the palsy, on purpose to convince the Jews that he, as man, had received power from God to forgive sins. Both these examples we have seen above, and it is needless to repeat them here, as it is easy to see from what I have already said, how beautifully they prove the essential connection between miracles and the doctrine attested by them. But I must not omit what our Saviour expressly declares on another occasion, when his enemies pretended that his casting out devils was by the power of Satan. When he performed a miracle of this kind, and restored the poor person that had been possessed, to the use of his speech and sight, of both which he had been deprived by the devil, the people were filled with admiration. His enemies, fearing the

consequences of so signal a demonstration of his power and divinity, seemed to make light of it, and pretended to account for it, by saying, "he casteth out devils by Beelzebub the chief of the devils;" our Saviour immediately demonstrates the weakness and fallacy of this allegation, by observing it was impossible that Satan should fight against himself, or that such a miracle could be performed but by the power of God; and then concludes thus: "If I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, NO DOUBT the kingdom of God is come upon you."*-Here the very point we have all along had in view is declared in express terms by Jesus Christ himself. He came among the Jews to establish the kingdom of God among them; the proof he brings of his mission, and the arguments he uses to establish that kingdom, are his miracles, and such miracles as could be performed by none but God, among which this of his casting out the devil bore a distinguished place; and he declares that these miracles are proofs so decisive of the truth of his doctrine, that it could admit of no manner of doubt: "If I, by the finger of God, cast out devils, NO DOUBT the kingdom of God is come upon you."

XII. The same method that Jesus Christ took to convince the Jews of the truth of his doctrine, he was pleased should be followed by his apostles also, whom he sent to preach that doctrine to the whole world. He gave them the power of working miracles, or, to speak more properly, he wrought many miracles by their means, in order thereby to convince the world of the divinity of their mission, and to establish and confirm the doctrine taught by them. After his ascension, when they had received the Holy Ghost, they immediately began to execute the great work their Master had given them to do, which St. Mark expresses in these words "And they went forth and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."† In the Acts also we are told, that "the apostles with GREAT POWER gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." ‡ St. Paul, in like manaer, when called to the same glorious office, used the same means in promoting his Master's cause; for he tells

Matth. xii. and Luke xi. † Mark xvi. 20. ‡ Acts iv. 33.

us in his Epistle to the Romans, that it was by miracles that he planted the gospel wherever he went: "By mighty signs and wonders," says he; "by the power of the spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about to Illyrium, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."* And again, writing to the Corinthians, "When I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God; for I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT, AND OF POWER. that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but IN THE POWER OF GOD." Here this great apostle informs us what the means were which he used in planting the gospel. The only doctrine he preached—the only wisdom he pretended to teach them—was the great mystery of Christ crucified. This, he assures us, in the preceding chapter, was "a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness." To persuade the Corinthians to receive and embrace this unheard-of doctrine as the truths of God, he used no pomp of eloquence, "no enticing words of man's wisdom;" but he called upon the spirit of God to attest and demonstrate the truth of the word he preached to them, by exerting his almighty power in working miracles, as the means the most adapted for the purpose designed; and by these he obtained his end, and converted them to Christianity. Now, in all these cases, seeing that Divine Wisdom thought proper to use miracles as the most proper means to convince the world that the truths of the gospel,— so sublime and incomprehensible in themselves, and so foolish in the eyes of worldly wisdom,—were nevertheless the truths of God, and revealed by him; shall we dare to say this means was improper, inadequate, or incapable of procuring what was intended by them? Certainly no one who believes the scripture to be the word of God can

do so. We must then conclude, again, that miracles are decisive proofs of doctrine, and that their authority as such is incontrovertible. St. Paul was so sensible of this. that he declares there is no salvation for such as refuse to embrace the doctrine of Christ, which is demonstrated by such convincing evidence to be the truth of God; for after beginning his Epistle to the Hebrews by informing us that God, who in former times had spoken to men, and declared his will to them by the ministry of angels, had "in these latter days spoken to us by his Son, by whom he also made the world;" he then goes on to show the vast excellency of the Son above the angels, from which he draws this obvious consequence, that we ought, of course, to pay so much the greater regard to what He has taught us, and be the more careful not to lose it; "therefore," says he, "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."* And then immediately alluding to the punishments inflicted on those who transgressed or disobeyed what had been delivered by angels, he draws this natural consequence of this argument, that it is impossible we should escape, if we refuse what has been delivered by the Lord of angels, especially when so strongly manifested by the many miracles wrought by God to attest and confirm it; "for if the word spoken by angels," says he, "was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"† From these words it is plain that St. Paul-or rather the Holy Ghost who inspired him-looked upon miracles wrought by God in confirmation of doctrine, to be a full, perfect, and decisive proof that the doctrine so confirmed is divine truth, and all those who refuse to believe it on such proof, are inexcusable before God, and shall be

punished accordingly.

XIII. Though the several passages of holy scripture which I have here made use of, have necessarily carried me on to a considerable length, and have occasioned my making repetitions in the application of them, which to some may seem superfluous; yet, as the subject is of so great importance, and each of these passages has something of a peculiar force and energy in proving the point in question, I thought it improper either to omit any of them entirely, or to blend them together in one argument; for the argument would thereby have lost a great deal of that weight and strength of proof, which a separate and distinct view of each will naturally have in the mind of every one who seriously and attentively considers them. Besides, as the importance of the subject I treat of is so great, it were desirable that what is said upon it should be made so plain and simple, that it may be thoroughly comprehended by the meanest capacity. Indeed, that is a point I have all along had in view, and it must plead my apology with those whose superior parts may think it tedious and disagreeable to see so minute a detail of points which they would easily and fully comprehend from a few hints.

XIV. It is for the same reason that, though the arguments I have already brought both from reason and revelation be more than enough to prove the authority of miracles wrought by God in proof of doctrine, yet I must not be content with these, but adduce one or two more, in order to fortify this important subject on all sides, and show how blameable those are who call it in question. The first argument I shall propose is an appeal to experience, and to the common sentiments of all mankind. Let us only examine the fact—what effects miracles have always had on the heart of man, and this will palpably demonstrate to us the authority and weight of a proof from them. When Elijah had raised to life the widow's son, and restored him to his mother, she imme

diately cried out in raptures of joy and admiration, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."* The moment Naaman was miraculously cured of the leprosy, he was converted upon the spot from his idolatry, and said to Elisha-"Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."† In the grand dispute between Elijah and the prophets of Baal-whether the Lord of Baal was the true God, with one consent it was put to the test of a miracle; and when this was performed in favour of the God of Israel, all the people to a man yielded to the heavenly light, and with one voice cried out, "The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God."; Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, whose haughty heart could not brook to acknowledge, even in God, a power superior to his own; "and who is the God," saith he to the holy children, "that will deliver you out of my hands?" yet so confounded was he when he saw their miraculous deliverance from the fiery furnace, that he instantly acknowledged their God to be the only true God, and made a decree whereby he commanded Him to be respected throughout all his empire, and threatened the utmost destruction to any one who should dare to "speak any thing amiss against him." The same effect the delivery of Daniel in the den of lions had upon king Darius, who made a decree like the former, wherein, convinced by the glaring evidence of Daniel's miraculous preservation, he acknowledges that "his God is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end; that he delivereth, and rescueth, and worketh signs and wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

XV. Nothing could be more foreign to the common sentiments of mankind, than to imagine that man should

^{* 1} Kings xvii. 24. † 2 Kings v. 15. ‡ 1 Kings xviii. § Dan. iii. 15. † 1 Kings xviii.

have the power of forgiving sins upon earth which were committed against the great God of heaven. We see in what an almost odious light all the reformed churches look upon a pretence of this kind, and the Jews esteemed it a downright blasphemy; yet, no sooner did our blessed Saviour work the miracle of curing the sick man of the palsy, to prove that he, as man, and whom the Jews then looked upon to be only a mere man, had this power, than immediately his most inveterate enemies were struck dumb; -they had not a word more to say against it;—and both they, and the whole multitude present filled with amazement at so luminous a proof-acknowledged that to be a divine truth which before they had esteemed a downright blasphemy, and "glorified God who had given such power unto men."* What was it that convinced Nicodemus of the divine mission of our Saviour, but the splendour of his miracles? "Rabbi," said he to him, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." + When the man, whom our Saviour restored to his sight, though born blind, heard the Pharisees speaking disrespectfully of his benefactor, he immediately undertook his vindication by this natural argument, drawn from the miraculous cure he had performed: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth; since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind; if this man were not of God, he could do nothing," etc. † Observe here with what strength of argument he proves the divine mission of . Jesus Christ. First, he lays down this principle, that God doth not perform wondrous things at the desire of sinners, but is ready to hear those who are his friends and servants; then he considers the nature of the miracle performed, which shows itself evidently to be the work of God, the like of which had not been heard of

[•] Matth. ix. 8.

from the beginning of the world, and from these two premises he draws this necessary consequence; since, then, God has, in fact, wrought this real miracle at the desire and by means of Jesus Christ, he must undoubtedly be from God, and God must be with him. This is the natural language which true miracles speak;—this is the impression they never fail to make on the heart of man.

XVI. It were endless to collect together the many instances which are found in every page of the gospel, of this natural but deep impression which the miracles of Jesus Christ made upon the Jews; the blazing light of this proof convinced them at once, and they sought no further evidence of the truth of what he said to them. But perhaps it will be objected here, that in reality this impression was not general—that many, and those the most learned, and of the greatest authority—paid no regard at all to the miracles of our Saviour, and were so far from being persuaded of the truth of his doctrine, that they looked upon him only as an impostor, and con-

demned him at last as an impious malefactor.

XVII. This objection is so far from weakening the force of our present argument, that it greatly confirms it; for it is evident from the whole history of our Saviour in his public life, that the continual opposition he met with from the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees, was entirely owing to the most inveterate hatred and envy they had conceived against him, on account of the esteem and credit which the miracles he wrought procured him among the people; and hence, blinded by these passions, they did violence to themselves in resisting that natural impression which his miracles did in fact make upon Read the account given of their behaviour when the man that had been born blind, was restored to his The evidence of this miracle confounded them; they called the man, and interrogated him respecting it; they would not believe he had been born blind; they questioned his parents; they asked himself what he thought of the matter; they used all their art to find

some pretext to discredit the miracle. But why all this? Doubtless from the conviction the miracle carried along with it, that the person who wrought it was from Goda conviction which their corrupt hearts were determined never to acknowledge. Yet, in spite of all this, it gained even upon some of them, who said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? and there was a division among them."* And again, when some said, "he hath a devil and is mad; others immediately replied, Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?"† From all this, then, it appears that even his enemies themselves were convinced by his miracles, though their diabolical passions so blinded them that they would not allow themselves to acknowledge the conviction. This appears still further from their behaviour when Lazarus was raised from the dead. This stupendous miracle so alarmed them, that they immediately called a council to deliberate what was to be done; and when they were met for this purpose, they plainly acknowledged both the reality of our Saviour's miracles, and the natural effect which they must undoubtedly produce among the people:-"This man doth many miracles," say they; "if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him." Could there be a greater proof of the impression these miracles made upon themselves? They plainly acknowledged their force in persuading, and if they are not persuaded themselves, it is because the strength of their passions, counteracting the evidence of the proof, will not allow them to be so. Another proof we have of this unhappy disposition of theirs, when St. Peter and St. John cured the poor cripple at the door of the temple.— This miracle had so surprising an effect, that no less than about five thousand men were converted after it. The chief priests and rulers were not a little grieved at this, and laid hands on them, bringing them before their council, and the man that had been cured along with them Here St. Peter boldly declared, that this miraculous cure

was performed in the name of Jesus Christ, and in attestation of his being risen from the dead, and that there is no salvation but through him; and this proof was so convincing that the scripture expressly observes "they had nothing to say against it." This miracle, then, made the proper impression upon the hearts even of the most inveterate enemies of Jesus; they were convinced by it; they could not object any thing to its evidence, yet, through the malice of their hearts, they would not be converted; and putting the apostles aside, they said, "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it." See here the impression the miracle made upon them; but, instead of yielding to its light, they added, "but that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name."* Seeing, therefore, upon the whole, that even those whose hearts were so blinded with passion that they were determined not to yield to conviction, could not help giving such plain indications of the deep impression the miracles of Christ and his apostles made upon their minds, and how sensible they were of the effects they must produce in others; we have in this testimony of adversaries the most convincing proof of the common sentiments of all mankind in this matter.

XVIII. As we proceed with the argument, our proofs multiply upon our hands. After our Saviour had ascended to heaven, his apostles entered upon the grand undertaking of reforming the whole world, overturning all established religions, rooting out the most inveterate opinions, destroying the deepest prejudices, enlightening the most barbarous nations with the knowledge of the sublime truths of salvation; and, in a word, of subjecting the whole world to the faith and law of Jesus Christ The project was vast and replete with dangers, and the difficulties involved in it seemed insurmountable. They

were themselves poor simple men, without the smallest human means to recommend them, or any help of man to assist them; yet they boldly enter upon the glorious enterprize, and carried along by the ardour of their zeal never cease till they have accomplished it. The means they made use of for this purpose were not the "enticing words of human wisdom," but the stupendous miracles they every where performed. These served them. instead of every thing else, and produced the most amazing effect in the hearts of the spectators; for, being regarded as the voice of Heaven—which they really were, they at once overcame the most inveterate prejudices, and "captivated their understandings in obedience to Christ;" convinced them that the doctrines attested by these miracles were the truths of God, and without any other arguments converted them to Christianity.-Thus, when St. Peter came to Lydda; "there he found a certain man named Æneas, who had kept his bed eight years and was sick of a palsy; and Peter said to him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise and make thy bed; and he arose immediately." This was enough; there was no need of other arguments to convince the people of that place of the truths of the gospel; this miracle alone was the most decisive proof of their being from God; and immediately "all that dwelt at Lydda turned unto the Lord."* In like manner, when St. Philip went down to Samaria to preach the gospel to that city, it is surprising to see what numbers were converted by him. But by what means was this brought -about? By the powerful eloquence of his miracles; for, "the people with one accord gave heed unto these things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did; for unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed, and there was great joy in that city." Nay, even Simon the magician himself, who had before pre-

^{*} Acts ix 33 et seq.

tended to be some great one, and had bewitched the Samaritans with his sorceries, was so confounded at the miracles wrought by Philip, that, unable to resist such evidence, he became a Christian. When Elymas the sorcerer endeavoured to turn away the proconsul Sergius from hearing the word of God, St. Paul, with one sentence, in the name of the Lord, struck him blind, in punishment of his impiety. The deputy Sergius sought no more; this miraculous punishment of that wretch convinced him at once that the doctrine in defence of which it was performed must be from God, and therefore, "when he saw what was done he believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."* What these three great saints did was done by all the other apostles and apostolical men whom Almighty God made use of to convert the heathen world to Christianity. They used no human helps for this purpose. Their arms like their doctrine were altogether divine—the voice of the Almighty attesting what they taught by the amazing miracles he performed for this purpose. —These every where had their desired effect, converted vast numbers to the faith of Christ, and confounded those who, through the violence of their passions and their inveterate prejudices. would not be converted.

XIX. Now, what is the natural consequence to be drawn from this long induction of examples? Nothing surely can more clearly demonstrate the voice of unprejudiced nature, and the common sentiments of all mankind with regard to the supreme authority of miracles wrought by Almighty God in proof of doctrine.—We see here, from evidence of facts, the deep impression divine miracles have always made on the heart of man, by themselves alone, immediately and altogether independently on any circumstances whatever.—And nere I may appeal to the very hearts of those who pretend to deny this authority. Suppose you had been present in our Saviour's days, and been an eye-witness

of all he did; suppose you yourselves had been possessed by the devil, or lame, or blind, or paralytic, or otherwise diseased, and had been miraculously and instantaneously cured by him; lay your hand upon your breast, and ask your own heart what effect, what deep impression must this have made upon you? I seek no other proof, I require no other voucher for the truth of what I here defend, than the unprejudiced answer which your

own heart will here give you.

XX. This observation leads me to another argument in proof of the authority of miracles, with which I shall conclude this subject; namely, the very testimony of our adversaries themselves. Convinced as they are in their own hearts of this truth, it is impossible for them, on certain occasions, not to discover it. Some of them, indeed, have acknowledged it in express terms; but all of them agree in confessing it indirectly, when they take so much pains to argue against it and ridicule it. What could have induced a David Hume to spend so much time and study as he must have done in inventing, dressing up, and publishing the elaborate argument, by which he would pretend to demonstrate, that it is absolutely impossible ever to prove the existence of a miracle? What could move him to this but the interior conviction rooted in the bottom of his heart, that if one single true miracle should be allowed in proof of Christianity, it alone would overbalance all his flimsy sophistry in favour of infidelity? What could have induced a Rousseau to use such insidious arts as he does throughout the whole of his Emilius, when he speaks of miracles, confounding the true state of the question, making false suppositions, and general appeals to the scripture for what is not to be found in so much as one single text, and sometimes even plainly contradicting himself and his own principles, in order by these disingenuous means to enervate the force and authority of miracles? What, I say, could make him be guilty of such dishonourable conduct, but the interior conviction he had, on the one hand, of the greatness of that authority which he wanted to destroy; and

his deliberate resolution on the other, like that of the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, never to acknowledge it? What, in a word, can induce a Voltaire, and the whole infidel tribe of his brother Deists, to be at so much pains to turn all miracles—even those of the sacred scripture—into ridicule, and to throw out their impious sneers on all occasions against them, but the consciousness of the effect they must undoubtedly have, if received and believed, and that it is not in their own power to find any other solid reason against them? Dr Convers Middleton, the most outrageous enemy that ever Christian miracles had, condemns as forgery and imposture all that ever were related since the apostolic age, for this single plain reason—because, if we allow their existence in one age after the apostles, we cannot reasonably deny them in all succeeding ages, seeing the proofs for their existence are absolutely the same in every age since that time; and then, if this be granted, there is no contesting the truth of Popery; for he observes, "a clear succession of miracles, deduced through all history, from the apostolic times down to our own, is a proof of all others the most striking to all minds, and the most decisive indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be true."* Could any thing but the main force of truth extort such an acknowledgment of the supreme authority of miracles from so declared an enemy? Those learned gentlemen who differ in opinion from Dr. Middleton about the exact period of the cessation of miracles, are, however, of the same opinion with him as to their authority in proof of doctrine:-"It must be granted," savs Doctor Church, + "that the present facts, which are appeals to the senses, are more striking and satisfactory, than any long intricate reasonings: And hence miracles may be pronounced to be the shortest and clearest means of conviction of the divine authority of any mission, and consequently of any doctrine, to those who see them. And farther, as we may have suf

^{*} Introd. Disc. p. 41.

ficient certainty of their having been worked in times past, they must, if well attested, be full proofs even to us who do not see them." This is a just observation, founded on the nature of the thing itself; and it is owing to the full conviction of this truth, that all Dr. Middleton's adversaries, though they disagree with him as to the precise period when miracles ceased in the Christian church; vet all agree, and labour with all their might to prove, that they have actually long since ceased; namely, at such periods as they think proper respectively to assign; because, as at these assumed periods, they suppose the corruptions of "Popery" began; to allow true miracles o be wrought after that, would, according to the above principle, be fairly yielding the day in favour of Popery. It is worth observing that what Atheists and Deists are forced to do against the Christian miracles in general, the children of the reformation are obliged, upon the very same principle, to do against the miracles wrought in the Catholic church. All of them feeling in their own hearts the conviction and authority of such a proof, are determined never to acknowledge it where their prejudices or passions induce them to reject the doctrine; because such an acknowledgment would be an utter condemnation of themselves; and both sides in this respect copy after the example of the chief priests and rulers of the Jews in their behaviour with regard to the miracles of Christ and his apostles.

Having thus established the authority of miracles uponthe most solid foundation, I should now go on to consider and refute the objections brought against it; but as their weakness will better appear when we have considred the criterion of miracles, which I shall next treat of, and which, as we shall see, is intimately connected with their authority, I shall delay taking notice of the objections till we have considered that important subject; that by this means their insufficiency and weakness may

the more manifestly be exposed.

CHAPTER X.

On the Criterion of Miracles

I. From what we have seen above on the authority of miracles, and especially from the explication there given of the true state of that important question, it appea a, that two things are pre-required for establishing this authority, so that it may have its full force, and make a due in ression on the heart of man: First, that the miraculars facts. do actually exist: Secondly, that they be performed by God, either immediately by his own almighty power, or by angels commissioned by him. If no miracle exist, or be pretended to exist, we are then out of the question; but when we are certain of the reality of the fact, we easily see, by looking into our own hearts, that its whole weight and authority is entirely founded on the supposition, that it has Almighty God for its author; for, if we either know, or even suspect, that what is done is not the work of God, its authority that instant falls to the ground. Hence, there arises two other questions of no small consequence in this matter; in each of which the enemies of religion have used their utmost efforts to entangle and darken the truth, by every vile art in their power, that they might thereby the more -effectually deprive the Christian faith of the invincible armour and strong defence which she draws from the splendour of her miracles. The first of these questions is, How shall we know that the miraculous facts did ever actually exist! Deism and infidelity reply here. it s impossible ever to know this: "Where," cries Rousseau, "are these miracles to be seen? are they related only in books ! pray who wrote these books-men-who were witness to these miracles; -men-who attest them ! what! always human testimonies! Is it always men who tell me what other men have told them? what a number

of these are constantly between me and the Deity!"* At other times he pretends to disprove their existence, as if it were unworthy of the Deity to have recourse to such means of convincing his creatures; and would persuade us, that the very number of miracles said to have happened is a proof that none ever existed at all: So that, according to him and his brethren-for he only speaks the language common to all the party—it is impossible for us to know for certain that any miracle ever existed of which we were not ourselves the eye-witness. It is also well known how strenuously the celebrated David Hume—another noted champion of infidelity has attacked the existence of miracles, and employed the utmost stretch of genius, and all the arts of sophistry, to persuade the world, that "a miracle supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument; and that no testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof." How far common sense approves of such ridiculous assertions, is now apparent from the contempt with which the famous argument, "in which he trusted," is every where regarded! These endeavours, however, show the spirit of the party, the conviction they feel of the invincible force of miracles being so fatal to their cause, and their consequent horror at the very thought of their existence. The second question is a sequel of the former; for in the supposition that a miraculous operation is actually performed, it is next to be inquired—How shall we know that it is truly the work of God, and not a delusion of Satan? If infidelity labours hard to disprove the existence of miracles, it endeavours with no less ardour to persuade us, that, though they should be allowed an existence, we are not a whit nearer our point, because it is impossible to distinguish whether they be from God or from the devil; and consequently, that we can never have any certainty of what is pretended to be proved by them.—

Emil, vol. iii. p. 108.

But without repeating here the absurdities with which those gentlemen have favoured, or rather pestered the world on this subject, and the many little arts they use to obscure the truth, and confound the true state of the question, I shall proceed, as usual, to clear it of the rubbish they have thrown upon it, and lay down those principles which reason and religion point out to us, as a proper foundation whereon to build its defence; then I shall endeavour to raise upon them such a superstructure as will convince any reasonable man, that the existence of miracles can be proved beyond contradiction, and that it can be known with equal evidence what miracles are, and what are not from God.

II. By the criterion of miracles, taken in the most general sense that the word can bear, may be understood those rules by which we form a right judgment of both these questions, that is, both of the existence of any miracle, and of its being, or not being, the work of the Deity. But this general sense is not the one in which it is commonly taken. The existence of any miracle is a question of fact, to be determined, like all other questions of that nature, by that kind of evidence which is common to all facts, and which we shall consider at large in its proper place; but whether a miraculous event known to exist, is, or is not the work of God, is a question of a peculiar kind, which must be determined by certain rules of judging proper to this subject only. And by the term Criterion of Miracles, is more commonly understood the rules laid down for this purpose. It is only in this sense that I at present use it; and to find out this criterion, that is, to investigate and lay down those rules, b; which we may be enabled to judge with certainty, whether the miraculous event be the work of God, or the operation of Satan, is the subject of our present inquiry. To do this with the necessary precaution and clearness, a few observations must be premised.

III. First, We must carefully distinguish between these two things, to tempt, and to induce into error. To tempt is to present, or not to remove such occasions as

solicit and entice us to do any thing contrary to our duty Now, we may know the thing to which we are tempted to be contrary to our duty, as when a person is solicited by evil companions to rob and steal; or the evil action may be proposed to us under the appearance of being good and lawful, or even a duty itself, but the fallacy of which appearance we can easily discover, if we use due care. Thus Eve was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit. under the appearance of good, expecting thereby to better her condition, and "become as gods;" though, had she used the least reflection, she might easily have seen that even though this were true, it could never excuse her transgressing the express command of the God that made her. Thus also Saul was tempted to transgress the orders delivered to him by the prophet Samuel, from an appearance of necessity, when he offered up sacrifice before that prophet's arrival,* though by a little attention he might easily have discovered the delusion. ations of this kin!, Satur, as the scripture expresses it, 'transforms himself into an angel of light," the better o compass his ends against us. In all these cases we are solicited-we are enticed to do the evil proposed, but we are not forced; we have it in our power to withhold our consent, to discover the delusion, and reject the proposal. But to induce into error is of a very different nature; this is to lay before us an inevitable necessity of our falling—to prepare for us a certain and infallible determination to evil-to put a snare in our way which it is impossible for us to escape. Now, it is evident to common sense, that though Almighty God may, for his own most just and wise ends, tempt us himself, or permit us to be tempted by others, yet it is absolutely impossible he should either himself induce us to error, or nermit others to do so; because, it is plain that by so doing he would manifestly contradict himself, and act contrary to his own divine attributes, his justice, his veracity, and his goodness; that is, he would himself

become the author of sin, error, and falsehood. God permitted Job to be tempted to impatience by his wife, by his three friends, and by the devil. But Job knowing that impatience was a sin, and that his duty required of him to receive with submission whatever the divine providence should send or permit to come upon him, resisted the temptation, and preserved his integrity.— When Satan tempted our Saviour himself, he proposed two of his temptations under the appearance of good, namely, to prove himself to be the Son of God by an act of omnipotence, commanding the stones to be made bread; and to show his confidence in the divine protection, by throwing himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, in hopes of being preserved from all hurt by the angels, according to the text of scripture cited for that end; but our Saviour well knew the delusion in both cases, and rejected the temptation; but as to inducing us to evil, the word of God expressly declares to us, that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."* In these words it is plainly declared that Almighty God will never permit us to be induced into evil, to be tempted in such a way that it will be out of our power to escape; for it would be inconsistent with his fidelity to do so. This will appear in a still stronger light if we consider what is meant when we say that God himself tempts us, or permits us to be tempted; for we must carefully observe, that Almighty God never intends, either in the temptations he sends on man himself, or in those which he permits from others, that the person so tempted should consent to the temptation, and commit sin. Far from it; he expressly commands the contrary. The only views Almighty God has in tempting man, either by himself or others, are to prove him, to try him, to see if, in fact, he be faithful to him, to give him an occasion of acquiring great good

to his soul by overcoming the temptation, and thereby of improving himself in solid virtue. Sometimes also he does it in just punishment for sins committed, and abuse of mercy; and in this manner "God tempted Abraham,"* and in several places of scripture he is expressly said to prove or tempt his people.† In like manner, also, an angel of Satan was permitted to tempt St. Paul for his greater humiliation and exercise of virtue; but God himself assured him, that "his grace was sufficient for him." It is true, when the wicked spirits are permitted to tempt man, their ardent desire is indeed to lead us to sin; but in this sense God never tempts; and for this reason the scripture says of God, "Let no man when he is tempted say, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man "t Seeing, then, that God cannot tempt man, or permit him to be tempted, with the direct view and intention that he should thereby fall into sin, much less can he, a God of infinite goodness, holiness and truth, induce man to error or sin by putting him under an unavoidable necessity of falling into either.

. Secondly, We have seen, from the most evident and repeated testimony of scripture, that Almighty God has at all times made use of miracles to attest the revelation of his will to man, or confirm the truth of his former revelation, when it was called in question; and that he bestows the gift of miracles, as his divine credentials, on those whom he sends forth to the world as his messengers for that purpose. Nay, we have seen that he looks upon this kind of proof to be so full and sufficient, that he condemns as altogether inexcusable those who refuse to submit themselves to its evidence, and punishes their obstinacy in the severest manner. From this, then, it flows as a necessary consequence, that it is impossible Almighty God should ever abuse this kind of proof, and prostitute it so as to make it infallibly promote and patronize error; or that he should even permit others so

Gen. xxii. 1. † See Exod. xv. 25 and xvi. 4. † James i. 13.

to do; for this would not only be altogether unworthy of himself, but would also invalidate every revelation of his will which he has hitherto made to his creatures and give them just grounds to call it in question, and

even to deny it.

Thirdly, We have also seen by the words and example both of friends and enemies, that a proof from miracles is of all others the most convincing and decisive; -- that it makes the deepest impression on the human heart;that it acts immediately, and of itself, prior to all reasoning or reflection; our nature being so framed and constituted by our Creator, that we no sooner apprehend any miraculous operation as the work of God, than we instantaneously feel the full weight of its authority in proof of the doctrine attested by it. Now, this immediate perception of the necessary connection between miracles wrought by God in proof of doctrine, and the truth of the doctrine itself—or this universal persuasion which all men have that the doctrine must be from God, when he himself works miracles in attestation of its being so; it is plainly repugnant to the idea we have of God, and of his perfections, to suppose that he should ever abuse this disposition of our nature by making use of it himself, or permitting others to do so, as an inevitable and infallible means of leading us into error or sin.

IV. From these three observations—the justness of which, I imagine, will not be called in question—the following conclusions necessarily result, and may be looked upon as axioms or fundamental principles in the

present question:

1. God Almighty can never possibly work a miracle, in any case or in any circumstances whatever, in order thereby to attest or give a sanction to falsehood. This proposition is evident in its very terms, and needs no illustration. God is a Being of infinite veracity, who cannot possibly will or intend falsehood or error, much less set his hand and seal to promote it (if I may say so), by working a miracle with that intent. Neither can he possibly lay his creatures under an unavoidable necessity

of falling into error, nor make use of that supreme influence which he himself has given to miracles over the hearts of men, as an infallible means to deceive; all which he would be virtually guilty of, did he ever work a miracle in attestation of a lie.

2. God can never permit any created agent to work a miracle, in order to attest or give a sanction to falsehood, when it is impossible for mankind to discover that the miracle wrought is only a relative miracle, and within the natural abilities of a creature. There are many kinds of miraculous operations which we know can be performed by supernatural created agents, as we have seen above; there are others which, as we shall see by and by, can only be performed by the almighty power of God; but as we are ignorant how far the power of created agents can go, there doubtless are many miraculous operations within the reach of their power, which yet we could not discover to be so, nor distinguish from what is proper to God alone. It is only concerning these that this present axiom proceeds; for, if we suppose the miracle performed, though in itself it be only a relative miracle, within the natural abilities of the angels, whether good or bad, yet to be of such uncommon greatness that we could not possibly discover it to be within the power of any creature, so that it had all the appearance of a divine miracle; on this supposition, it is impossible that Almighty God should permit any created agent to perform such a miracle in attestation or defence of a falsehood. The reason is plain, because such a miracle with regard to its effects on man would be entirely the same as a miracle wrought by God himself; and consequently, if he should permit such a miracle to be performed in attestation of error, he would thereby necessarily induce his creatures into error—abuse the only external means of convincing them of his will, and prostitute that very constitution of their nature which he himself has formed, by making it the infallible means of deceiving them. Hence Dr. Clarke very justly observes, that "God canot work miracles to deceive men himself, nor permit

evil spirits to impose upon men when the error would be invincible, which would be the very same thing as if he worked them himself."* Hence it follows, that our ignorance of the extent of the powers of supernatural beings in performing things miraculous can be of no prejudice to us; because the divine perfections of God, his veracity, his fidelity, his sanctity, his goodness, are our certain pledges that he never will allow them to exert these powers, so as invincibly to deceive us and

lead us into error. 3. God cannot allow evil spirits to perform any relative miracle, known to be so, in attestation or defence of falsehood and error, when the circumstances are such that the performing of the miracle would inevitably lead men to believe the falsehood, and consequently induce them into error. This proceeds upon the same grounds as the former axioms; for if mankind would be necessarily induced into error by the miracle performed, whether this arose from the greatness of the thing donewhich had all the appearance of a divine miracle-or from the circumstances in which the miracle was performed, and which necessarily induced men to believe it was from God. In either case, if God should permit such a miracle to be performed by evil spirits in favour of error, he would be equally guilty of acting against his own divine perfections. We have an example of this in the famous contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal The question was, whether the Lord or Baal was the true God. The people were "divided in their hearts, and halted"—as the scripture expresses it—"between two opinions." To settle their minds in the truth, Elijah proposed to refer the decision of the question to a miracle; and the miracle he proposed was, that he on the part of God, and the prophets of Baal on his part, should each build an altar, and lay on it a victim, and call upon their respective Deities, and that the one who should send down fire from heaven to consume the victim

[·] Evid, of Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 228.

should be esteemed the only true God; and Elijah allow ed the prophets of Baal to make the first trial. Now here it is to be observed: first, That the miracle proposed of sending down fire to consume the victim—was certainly within the natural power of Satan; for, we are assured, that by God's permission, he sent down a great fire on Job's numerous flocks of sheep and consumed them entirely, and all his servants, except one who escaped to tell him of the disaster. It is true, this servant, in relating what had happened, uses the expression, "the fire of God hath fallen;" but the whole tenor of the narration shows that Satan was the immediate agent in all that happened to Job; for Almighty God expressly says, when he gave him permission to afflict Job, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thy hand;" and it is an usual expression in scripture to say, the mountains of God, the cedars of God, to express the greatness of these objects. Besides, the scripture only relates here what Job's servant said; and seeing the dreadful fire that fell and the mischief it did, but not knowing any thing of the cause of it, it was very natural for him to use that expression, and call it the fire of God. Secondly, That Satan was here exceedingly interested to have the miracle performed; his worship was at stake, his honour engaged, and he must either stand or disgracefully fall, according to the result of the test appealed to; we cannot then doubt either his power or his good will to perform the miracle, if Almighty God had allowed him. Thirdly, That as the case stood, if Satan had been permitted to perform this miracle, when called upon for that purpose, the people would have been unavoidably led to, and confirmed in their idolatry; for their minds were fluctuating, and the whole regal power in the hands of an imperious heathen queen, was employed in support of idolatry. Every worldly motive, therefore, conspired to encourage the people to embrace it; and the priests and prophets of God had been all destroyed except Elijah, who alone appeared in defence

of the true God. But what could he alone oppose against such a torrent? He appeals to a miracle; he proposes such a one as he thought proper, and he allows the prophets of Baal to make the first trial. The whole people, anxious to see their doubts settled by so convincing an argument, readily embrace the proposal, determined to entirely embrace that side on which the miracle should be performed. From all this it is manifest that had the devil been permitted to send down fire a the prayers of Baal's prophets, the whole people must have been inevitably fixed in their idolatry; the priests of Baal would have immediately triumphed, and probably they would have fallen upon Elijah and destroyed him, without so much as giving him a hearing. Though they had acted more temperately and afforded him an opportunity of defending his cause, what could he have said! He himself had put the matter to this test, and it had declared in favour of his adversaries. He might say, "I too will obtain fire on my victim;" but though he had done so, it would only have put both sides on an equal footing, and served nothing at all to the main purpose of deciding the question. In this case the people, having no superior conviction in favour of the true God, and influenced by every worldly motive, besides their natural proneness to idolatry, must doubtless have continued in their idolatry, and given themselves up to it more and Wherefore, in these circumstances we see that Almighty God restrained the natural power of Satan, and would by no means permit him to exert it in per forming the miraculous operation proposed—which oth erwise he could easily have done—because these cir cumstances were such, that had he been allowed to per form it, the consequences would of necessity be most fatal to that poor people, and of course the permission itself would have been contrary to the wisdom, veracity, goodness and mercy of God. The same arguments equally show, that what Almighty God did here he is no less bound to do in all similar cases; and that he never can allow wicked spirits to do such miraculous operations

as are within the sphere of their natural powers, and known to be so, in favour of error, when the circumstances are such, that their doing so would necessarily

seduce mankind into deception and error.

4. If Almighty God, for his own wise and good ends, whether to try his servants or to punish sinners, should, at any time permit evil spirits, by means of their agents upon earth, to perform miraculous operations in favour of false doctrine, he is obliged by his own divine perfections to give mankind, at the same time sufficient means to discover the delusion, and prevent their seduction from being inevitable. This is a natural and necessary consequence of the three preceding axioms, and grounded upon the same reasons, and is what Almighty God has actually done in all such cases as are recorded in the scripture, as we shall see by and by in answering the objections against the authority of miracles.

V. Though what I have here said can admit of no reply, and is fully sufficient to establish the truth of the above four axioms, yet, as it is of the highest importance to have them settled on the most solid foundation, I shall here subjoin one observation more to illustrate the whole and place it in another clear point of view.

All created beings without exception, having received from God whatever powers or faculties they possess, are totally dependent upon him, not only for their existence itself and all their powers, but also for the exercise of them; so that they can never possibly exert them but by his will or permission; for, to say they could act as they pleased independently of God, or whether he would or not, would be to withdraw them from the being of creatures, and make them gods. If therefore Almighty God should allow evil spirits to use the freedom of their own will without control, and to exert all their natural faculties in deceiving mankind, by working for that purpose such amazing signs and wonders as could not possibly be distinguished from true miracles wrought by God aimself; in such a situation, what part could men act! What side should or could they take!—If they embrace

the false doctrine attested by these delusive operations. they immediately become the dupes of the devil's malice. and their fall is unavoidable: if they refuse to submit to that light which carries with it such a splendour as persuades them it is from God; then they resist the highest evidence, they refuse subjection to what they are convinced in their own hearts, is the will of their Creator; and consequently, in this case also, their ruin is infallible. Would God be a God of infinite goodness and love to his creatures, should he allow poor helpless man to be thus miserably imposed upon, and reduced to such a sad dilemma! Again, considering the evident and necessary connection which reason clearly perceives between miracles wrought by God to attest the truth of any doctrine. and the truth of that doctrine itself, and considering the almost irresistible force that the perception of this connection has over the mind of man, for convincing us of the truth of any doctrine so attested, it may justly be said, that there cannot be a more convincing proof of the truth of any doctrine than a miracle wrought by God for that purpose; and therefore, that miracles are truly the language of God, by which he speaks to man, and the seal of heaven, by which divine truths are authenticated and confirmed. If, therefore, we suppose, that Almighty God should allow evil spirits to speak in this language, in order to deceive mankind, and to use this seal, thereby to give a sanction to falsehood and error; that is should he allow them to work, in attestation of false doctrine, miracles of such a kind, and in such circumstances, as should give the mall the appearance of divine miracles, and leave no possible means for man kind to discover the delusion, what must be the consequence! It is evident, that in this case mankind would of necessity be induced into error; and errors and lies would be propagated and patronized by means of the language of God and seal of heaven. Would God be a God of truth, a God of fidelity, a God of holiness, did he permit this to be done, and allow his name to give such a sanction to error?—Hence, then, we justly conclude, that these four axioms cannot be contested without at the same time calling in question the goodness, veracity, and sanctity of the Deity; they stand upon the same base with these divine perfections, and both must

stand or fall together.

VI. From these axioms, grounded on such a solid foundation, we readily discover the criterion we are in quest of, or the rules by which we can certainly know what miraculous operations are from God and what are not, when wrought in defence of doctrine. They are as follows:

First rule: "When any miracle is performed which evidently implies an act either of almighty power or of infinite wisdom, such a miracle carries its own proof in

its bosom, that it is the work of God."

This rule needs no explanation; it is evident in its terms; but it will be proper here to consider a little more minutely what particular kinds of miracles fall under this head. And, first, with regard to omnipotence; a miraculous operation may require the power of God to perform it, either from the thing done or from the manner of doing it. Of the first class are these following: 1. The real transmutation, or change of one substance into another, such as the change of Moses's rod into a serpent; of the waters of Egypt into blood; and of the water, at the marriage of Cana, into wine. These were real changes of substance; the work of the almighty power of God, who, having at the beginning created all things out of nothing; can alone, in an instant, change one thing into another. As for the rods which the magicians are said to have changed also into serpents, there was no real change of substance, but either a substitution of one thing for another, or, at most, an apparent change, the work of enchantment and fascination. 2. The raising of a dead man to life; which may be considered as a kind of creation, being a production of life where there was none, and which supposes in the agent an absolute dominion both over the scal and body of man, so as to be capable of re-uniting them together

m one living principle of action and sensation, after they had been, by the dissolution of the body, entirely separated from one another. Now, we can scarcely conceive any creature to have such an absolute dominion over the soul and body of man; but as God alone at he beginning breathed into the human body the breath of life, so it would seem impossible for any creature to restore by its own natural strength, when once God had been pleased to take that breath away. 3. The restoring members, such as legs, arms, eyes, or the like, to those who had lost them, or giving them to those who never had them. 4. Dispossessing the devil; which implies a power far superior to Satan, as our Saviour justly argues against those who pretended that he cast out devils by the power of the devil. 5. The power of replication, or of multiplying any bodily substance, and making it be in different places at the same time. These and other such operations seem clearly to be the proper work of the almighty power of God; and we shall afterwards see they are declared to be so by God himself in his holy scriptures. The manner also by which a miracle is performed, may show it to be the work of omnipotence, when it is evidently above all created power, and such it must be considered when the effect is produced by the simple act of the agent's will. The light of reason clearly shows, that no created being in nature can have such power over any other creature as to make it act or produce any physical effect merely by willing it should do so, whether this will be expressed outwardly or not: This is a prerogative which solely belongs to the Creator, who at the beginning said, "Let the light be made;" and immediately, obedient to his holy will, "the light was made;" and who, when he cleansed the poor man of the leprosy,* said, "I will, be thou cleansed; and immediately," in an instant, obedient to his almighty will, "his leprosy was cleansed." When any natural agent wants to produce a physical effect upon

any creature, he must act upon it physically, and use perhaps, the help of other creatures, as means or instru ments and will take some time before the effect is produced. It is not enough that he wills it,—his willing i will not alone be sufficient to perform it. Hence, there fore, to produce any such effect by the sole act of th will, can belong to Him alone, who by his sole will a first created all things out of nothing, and to who e almighty will only all things are perfectly subjected. Hence, many of those effects which may be brought about without any miracle by ordinary means, and by the help of natural causes, do yet become real miracles, and such as are proper only to almighty power, when they are performed without the help of natural causes, and in an instant, at the sole desire, command, or will of the person by whose means they are performed. this account, the giving of sight to the blind, cleansing the leper, curing the deaf, healing the sick, and the like, which may be brought about in time by the use of medicines, when performed all at once, as our blessed Saviour did, by his touch, or command, or the simple act of his will, and in a perfect and permanent manner, are evidently the work of the divine power, and far superior to the ability of all created agents. But if the thing performed be itself a work proper to omnipotence, as those above-mentioned,—for example the raising of a dead man to life,—and it be performed in this manner, instantaneously by the sole act of the will; this will impart a double lustre to such miracles, and show them above all contradiction to be the work of Almighty God.

VII. A miracle is also proved to be the work of God alone, when it is evidently an effect of infinite wisdom. There are two particulars which come under this head; namely, penetrating into the heart of man, so as to discover his most secret thoughts, and knowing future contingent events, which solely depend on the free will of others. We do not consider it manifestly impossible that a created intelligence should be so extensive as to

be able to see and comprehend all those things which at present have an actual existence in nature, understanding their properties, causes, relations, effects, and the like, as also, those actions of men which are manifested outwardly. But, to penetrate into the heart of man, to understand his most secret thoughts, and those simple acts which arise from, and solely depend upon, his freewill, much more to foretell what will be the acts of his free-will in after-times, and even of persons who are yet unknown, and what they will say and do in consequence of their free choice; all this, as is plain from the bare proposal of it, is far beyond the utmost reach of all created intelligences, and is competent to that great Being only who, having at first created the heart of man, knows perfectly well all that he is capable of willing and thinking, all that he actually does will or think, and all he afterwards will think or do, for all eternity. Wherefore, the discovering the secret thoughts of the heart of man. and the foretelling with certainty future contingent events, many ages before they happen, are miracles which exceed all created knowledge, and are proper to God only.

VIII. There remains another rule for knowing what miracles properly belong to almighty power alonenamely, the sacred scriptures. For, when these divine oracles ascribe any miraculous operation to God alone, as a thing proper to his almighty power, this must afford most convincing proof to all those who believe the scriptures to be the word of God, that such miracles are above the power of all created agents. Now, from this unerring guide we draw an ample confirmation of all we have advanced above on this subject, and find that each of the particular miracles which, as we have seen by the light of reason, can be attributed to no cause less: than infinite wisdom, are in these sacred oracles expressly declared to be operations competent to none but the Almighty Creator. Let us examine some of the most remarkable.

1. Raising the dead to life. Of this Almighty God says of himself, "See now that I, even I am he, and

there is no God with me; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal."* Here his being the only author of life is appealed to as a proof of his being the only God. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, in her hymn of thanksgiving for her son, acknowledges the same truth, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up."† In the book of Wisdom the same truth is beautifully expressed thus, "For it is thou, O Lord, that hast power of life and death, and leadest own to the gates of death, and bringest back again."t In the New Testament the proofs of this are very strong and conclusive. When on the Sabbath-day, our Saviour had cured the sick man, who had been labouring under his infirmity for thirty-eight years, and upon that occasion had declared himself to be the Son of God, the Jews sought to kill him, both for breaking the Sabbath by curing upon it, and for making himself equal to God. All he said in his own defence was an appeal to his works. and he particularly mentions raising the dead, as a work which being proper to the Father, proves that he who had the power of performing it, was himself equal to the Father; "For," says he, "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." And a little after he adds, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live; for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." In these words it is declared that the power of raising the dead to life is a power proper to God, and his great prerogative; and its being given by the Father to the Son is assigned as the cause why the dead shall be restored to life at hearing the voice of the Son, and consequently, as a convincing proof that Jesus Christ, at whose voice the dead were actually raised to life, is this very Son of God. Now all this reasoning would have been very inconclusive if

Deut. xxxii. 39. † 1 Sam. ii. 6. † Wisd. xvi. 13. § John v 21. | | Ibid 25.

the power of raising the dead had been competent to any creature. In like manner, when our Saviour raised Lazarus, he did it on purpose to convince those present that he was sent from God, which it could not have proved if the raising the dead had not been a miracle proper to the almighty power of God. Lastly, not only the poor widow of Zarephath was convinced that Elijah "was a man of God, and that the word of the Lord was true in his mouth," when she saw her son dead restored to life by his means; but also when our Saviour raised the widow's son of Nain, the whole people present were persuaded it was the work of God; for "there came a great fear upon all, and they glorified God, saying, a great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God has visited

his people."*

2 Restoring members to those that want them. This also in scripture is attributed solely to God as a work proper to him alone. When the apostles asked our blessed Saviour about the man born blind, whether this was in punishment of his own sins or of those of his parents, he answered: "neither, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." + Consequently, to give sight to one born blind is properly the work of God, above the power of any creature; and this man was born without his sight, on purpose to manifest the work of God in him by receiving it. And, indeed, this miracle was so evident a proof of the finger of God, that the Pharisees were confounded by it, and knew not what to say against it; their pride would not allow them to yield to its conviction, and they fell out among them selves disputing about it, whilst the poor man himself, sensible of the greatness of the miracle, cries out before them all, "since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind; if this man was not of God he could do nothing."

3. The performing of miracles in an instant by the sole act of the will, is not only attributed to the power of

God alone in the holy scriptures, but to these, in a pas ticular manner, our Saviour appeals as proofs of h being the Messias, in his answer to St. John the Baptist for the most of the cures mentioned in that answer were miraculous only in the manner, and would have been very inconclusive proofs of his being the Messias, if they could be performed in that manner by any creature. Also, Jesus Christ declares, that the works which he did "were given him by his father to do, and that they bear witness to him that the Father had sent him."* And in another place he says, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him." † In these texts he expressly affirms his works to be the works of his Father, and incontestible proofs of his mission; now the generality of the works which he did, and to which he here appeals, were such as might be brought about in time by the help of natural means, but were miraculous, and such as God alone can perform, only on account of their being done without any natural means, in an instant at his command and the sole act of his will.

4. As to the two acts of omniscience—the knowledge of the secrets of the heart of man, and foreseeing things to come—those also are in a particular manner attributed in scripture to God alone. With regard to the first, Almighty God expressly claims it to himself as his own proper perogative. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it! I the Lord search the heart and try the reins."† Solomon also in the Proverbs declares the same in very strong terms: "Hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more then the heart of the children of men?" And still more expressly in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, "For thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of

^{*} John v. 36. † Jer. xvii. 9, 10

all the children of men."* And as regards the knowledge of futurity, it is so essentially proper to God only, that he himself challenges the gods of the heathen, to foretell what is to come, and promises to acknowledge them as gods if they do: "Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob: Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen—or declare to us things for to come; show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that

ye are gods."+ This needs no application.

IX. From what has been said under this first rule of the Criterion, it appears that miracles of this order need no extrinsic proofs of their being the work of God They carry the conviction of this along with them Wherever they have been performed they have conquered at sight, and convinced the minds of the spectators that they were the work of the Almighty. But to take away all pretence of ambiguity from them, we need only apply to them, as well as to all others, the rules of the Criterion which I am going to explain, and which cannot fail to give the most entire satisfaction.

X. Second: rule "When any miraculous operation is performed, which has all the appearance of being the work of God, and which cannot be known by men to be within the power of created agents, though perhaps in itself it may be so; such a miracle is certainly either the work of God, or of good angels commissioned and author-

ized by him."

This is a necessary consequence of the second axiom; and, in fact, such miracles as we here speak of are, with regard to man, to all intents and purposes, the same as those of the former rule; for they must appear to man to be as much the work of God, and consequently make as deep an impression on his heart as those which can only be done by God himself. Now, as it is evidently impossible that God should permit evil spirits to work such miraculous operations in defence of error, as mankind could

not possibly discern from the works of God; it therefore follows, that all such operations are to be esteemed either as the immediate operation of God himself, or as done by positive commission from him, and are consequently to be considered in the same light as those of the former rule.

XI. Third rule: "When any new doctrine is taught as coming from God, and the teacher works miracles in the name of God, and by invoking him to perform them in attestation of his commission, and of the doctrine he teaches, such miracles are certainly the work of God,

and done by authority from him."

All the principles and axioms above-established conspire to prove the justness of this rule, and plainly show that in the case proposed, it is impossible Almighty God should either himself perform the miracle or permit any creature to do it, if the teacher of this new doctrine be not commissioned by him to teach it. The reason is plain, because if he acted otherwise, that is, if either he himself performed the miracle demanded, or allowed any other to do it, though the teacher was an impostor and his doctrine false; this would evidently be to allow his name, his language, and his seal to be used in defence of a lie, and infallibly to induce men into error. Let us explain the case. I pretend to be sent by God, and I am not; I teach a doctrine which I protest was revealed by God to me, whilst I know it was not; or, if you please, deluded by the enthusiastic frenzy of a heated imagination, I fancy myself to be sent by God to teach a doctrine which I falsely imagine he had revealed to me, and I call upon God to work a miracle to attest that what I say Is it not repugnant to the very idea we have of God, to suppose that he would grant my petition in either case proposed, and work the miracle I demand? It certainly is so. Let us suppose again that I had a compact with the devil to perform the miracle, and that my call ing upon God is only a pretence, the more easily to gain credit; but that upon my doing so, Satan engages to dc what I ask; is it not here also evidently impossible that

God should allow the devil to do any thing miraculous in these circumstances Would not such permission be equally concurring to patronize error and falsehood, as if he had wrought the miracle himself! Hence then we may justly conclude, that any miracle performed in the name of Almighty God, and by calling upon him, is most undoubtedly the work either of God himself, or of those who are commissioned by him. When a person openly opposes himself to God, or to his known truth, we easily see that God, for his own wise ends, may permit the devil in this case, by means of such a person, to perform signs and wonders; but there is plenty of resource against the delusion, which carries in its front its own condemnation. But if a person should pretend to be sent from God, and under that pretence teach false doctrine, and work miracles to prove what he teaches, it is plain, that in this case there is no resource—our ruin and seduction are inevitable, and God himself becomes the abettor of falsehood, and the cause of our fall: it is therefore impossible in such circumstances that Almighty God should ever allow any thing miraculous to be done at all; and consequently that a miracle performed in his name, and by calling upon him, is most assuredly the work of his hand.

XII. What I have here said is fully confirmed by the example of Jesus Christ, who appeals to this very rule as the criterion by which to prove that the miracles wrought by him were the works of his Father; "The works that I do," says he, "IN MY FATHER'S NAME, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." And when he was about to raise Lazarus to life, addressing himself to his Father, he said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I know that thou hearest me always; but because of the people that stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." In the former of these texts, he expressly asserts that the works done in his Father's name are a full and sufficient tests-

mony of his being sent by him, and consequently, that their being done in his name is a full proof that he is the author of them. In the other text, having prayed to his Father to grant his request in raising Lazarus from the dead, he thanks him for hearing him before all present, and expressly declares he does so, that they, seeing this miracle performed by invoking Almighty God, might thereby be convinced that he was sent by his Father, and consequently, that the miracle he wrought by calling upon God, and acknowledging it to be from him, was, by that very circumstance, undoubtedly proved to be his work. After our Saviour's ascension, the apostles, taught by their Master's example, took the same method to convince the world that Jesus Christ was, as they preached, true God, and really risen from the dead, by working miracles in his name. Thus, when St. Peter restored the poor cripple beggar to the use of his limbs, he said, "In THE NAME of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk."* And when the people all ran together marvelling at so extraordinary a miracle, he first took occasion to declare to them that Jesus is the Son of God, and risen from the dead; and then adds, in proof of this, "AND HIS NAME, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong whom ye see and know,"† in which words we see that this miracle is given as the very reason to prove that he is the Son of God, and is proved to be his work, because done in his name; nay, Jesus Christ himself, when he gave his apostles commission to preach his gospel, and gave them the power of working miracles in his confirmation, declares, at the same time, that these miracles should be done in his name, "IN MY NAME they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, etc,"+ thereby plainly intimating that their being done in his name would be the proof that he was the author of them. From all which we justly conclude, that Almighty God cannot permit any miracles to be performed in his name, but when he himself is the author of them.

XIII. Fourth Rule: "When any point of doctrine, believed to have been formerly revealed, comes afterwards to be denied or called in question; if any person shall in the name of God, and by invoking him, perform a miracle in attestation of either side of the doubt, such miracle is undoubtedly from God."

This rule stands upon the same foundation as the one last mentioned, and, strictly speaking, they may both be considered only as two cases belonging to the same rule: for the very same reasons, which show that Almighty God will never allow his sacred name to be used by any impostor, who falsely pretends to be sent by him and teaches new doctrines, will, with no less evidence, convince us that he never will allow it to be used in defence of any kind of false doctrine, however it may be believed to be true, and have been received as such: and therefore, in the case proposed, where a dispute arises about any received point of doctrine, if a miracle should be wrought in the name of God to attest either side of the question, that miracle is undoubtedly from God, and must decide the controversy. The case of Elijah and the prophets of Baal comes in exactly here. The old received belief of the people of Israel was, that the Lord was the only true God; but for some time past by the authority and politics of their kings, they had been induced to forsake the service of the Lord, and worship the idol Baal as the true God. Many, from their natural proneness to idolatry, had gone headlong into this delusion; some few had preserved their integrity, and not bowed their knee to Baal, and great multitudes fluctuated in their minds, and halted between two opinions. last the decision of the question is put to the test of a miracle, and the event shows the truth of the rule we have before us, namely, That in such cases God Almighty never will allow any miraculous operation to be performed in the name of the true God, but what is actually from him, and in defence of this truth. We must, however, further observe in this place, that, if the former revelation of the received opinion be grounded on sufficient author-

ty, it is not incumbent on Almighty God to work a miracle in its defence when it happens to be called in question; and therefore, the want of a miracle, though demanded in attestation of the received doctrine, is no proof, nor even presumption against it. The people of Israel, in the days of Elijah, were inexcusable in admitting a doubt as to who was the true God, considering by what convincing arguments the Lord had proved himself to their fathers to be so, and therefore he was nowise obliged to work another miracle before them to attest his divinity, though he was obliged not to allow the devil to work one in his own favour. What God did then on this occasion was the effect of his infinite goodness, condescending to the weakness and misery of these poor people. But the case is very different with those who cal in question or deny any article which is already received as a truth formerly revealed by God. This denial is a new doctrine, a doctrine tending to overturn what is believed to be a divine truth; and as nothing less than a divine authority can be sufficient to destroy a truth believed on sufficient grounds to be divine and revealed by God, therefore whoever attacks any such received doctrine, or its revelation, is obliged to prove that he is commissioned and authorized by God to do so, especially if. in fact, he pretends himself to be sent by God for that end. And as miracles are the proper proofs of such commission, and the usual credentials given by Almighty God to those whom he sends on such errands, it is, therefore, justly demanded of all such innovators to perform miracles in proof of their mission; and their not being able to do so is a just presumption against them, if not their entire condemnation. Upon this ground it was that the Catholic church challenged Luther and the other reforming apostles to prove their pretended mission by miracles; had they been what they pretended to be, commissioned and authorized by God to reform the doctrine of the church, to condemn as falsehoods so many articles of her faith, and to reject as errors such a numper of points which had from time immemorial been received as truths formerly revealed by God, it is clear in this case that Almighty God was obliged to give unquestionable proofs that he had sent them, and to prove their commission to be divine by working miracles for this purpose. The church therefore with reason demanded this proof from them, and as they never were able to give what she demanded, she justly rejected them as impostors, and condemned their novelties as false doctrine and heresy.

XIV. Fifth rule: "If the miracles have been foretold by prophecy, long before they were performed, and afterwards were performed in the very same manner in which they were foretold, this is another convincing proof that

such miracles are from God."

As this rule contains three several cases, we must consider them separately, in order to unfold the full sense

and meaning of it.

The first case regards prophecy itself considered as a miracle, and as an undoubted proof of the finger of God We have seen above, that to foreknow and foretell future contingent events—especially for any considerable time before they happen—is the perogative of God alone, who perfectly knows all things past, present and But I observed at the same time, that superior beings, from their more intimate knowledge of the secrets of nature, from their own greater sagacity in penetrating the humours, inclinations, and various dispositions of the human heart, or from what they have resolved to do themselves, by God's permission, can, on many occasions, foreknow, and foretell, by their visible agents, things to come, not only necessary events with certainty. but even such as are contingent with a very high probability, which will seldom fail to be accomplished. Suppose then an impostor assisted and instructed by evil spirits, should endeavour by such prophecies to delude mankind, how shall we discover the delusion, and know. for certain whether these prophecies are from God, or from the devil ?- The rule given above for other miracles is particularly to be applied here, namely,-" If the

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prophecy be made in the name of God, and is afterwards verified by its accomplishment, that prophecy is doubtless from God."—This is the very rule given by God himself as the infallible criterion of the divinity of a prophecy-" The prophet who shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak—even that prophet shall die.—And if thou say in thine heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken."* And it follows by a necessary consequence, that, "if the thing come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath spoken." The reason is plain, from what we have said above at large, founded on this evident truth, that Almighty God never will, nor, consistently with his own divine perfections, never can permit his sacred name to be made use of to patronize error or promote falsehood.

The second case regards all other miraculous facts as foretold by prophecy, and may be expressed thus;-"When any miraculous operations which are performed had been foretold long before they happened, and were foretold in the name of the living God, and as miracles which were to be wrought by him, by means of persons commissioned and sent by him; this also is a most incontestible proof that these miracles when they actually do happen as they had been foretold, are from God." This was a most glorious prerogative which the miracles of Christ possessed, that they had been foretold by the prophets in the name of the Lord, some hundreds of years before he came into the world; and from this is drawn a most unanswerable proof that Christ is the true God, which Origen very justly argues against Celsus. Isaiah, some ages before Christ, had foretold, that God himself would come amongst us to save us, and that he would restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the weak, and the like; -"They shall see

^{*} Deut. xviii 20, 21, 22.

the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God; strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you; then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."* After a great number of years Christ appears in the world; he declares himself to be the Son of God, and that he is come "to seek and to save those that were lost;" and as a proof that what he says is true, he performs all those very miracles that were foretold of the Saviour by the prophet. As, therefore, none but God could foretell such events so long before, as this prophecy was made in the name of God, as it was literally fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, therefore we justly conclude that his miracles are from God, and that he himself is that very God whom the prophet foretold would come to save us, and work those very miracles he did in proof of his divinity.

"If it should be objected," says St. Irenæus, "that the devil had done things (miracles) of this kind by illusions, we carry them back to the prophecies, and will demonstrate from them that all things had been most exactly performed by Jesus Christ as they had been fore-told, and that he alone is the Son of God."† And, indeed, it must be owned this argument is a most convincing refutation of what both Jews and Heathens alleged against the miracles of our Saviour, in pretending that they were done by art magic, and by the help of the devil. St. Augustine displays this argument very beautifuly;—"The prophetic testimony accompanies the preaching of the apostolic doctrine. To prevent what the apostles announced from being despised, these things were shown to have been foretold by the prophets; for though they appealed to their miracles, there would not

have been wanting then, as there are not wanting now. such as would ascribe them all to magical powers, had not such a thought been overpowered by the testimony of the prophets; for none, sure will say, that they had by art magic provided prophets beforehand to foretell their miracles, and this long before they were born them selves." Also, in his Sermon xxvii. on the Words of the Apostle, he inculcates the same argument very beau tifully:—"Who of us," says he, "does not wonder at the saying of an apostle that prophecy is more firm and sure than a voice from heaven? Observe, he said, it was more sure, not better, nor truer; for that word from heaven was as true as the prophetic word, and as good and as profitable.—How then more sure, unless more apt to convince the hearer! And why more apt! Because there are infidels so injurious to Christ, as to say, that he wrought his miracles by art magic-who might also refer the voice from heaven to the same art.—But the prophets were not only before this same voice, but before Christ was born in the flesh.—Christ sent his prophets before he had assumed our flesh; whoso then says that he was a magician, and as such caused himself to be worshiped even after his death, will he also say, that he was a magician before he was born !-You see the reason why the Apostle says—we have a more sure word of prophecy.—The voice from heaven was to admonish the faithful; the prophetic word, to convince the infidel."

The third case regards those miracles which the person himself foretells beforehand that he is to perform, and even permits others to appoint the circumstances of time, place and manner of working them, or even to ask what miracle they please, and foretells he will perform it according as they shall please to determine; when then in fact he does this it is also an undoubted proof that miracles so wrought are done by the power of God, and that the person who so performs them is sent by Him. On this account the miracles of Moses carried

^{*} Lib. xii. contr. Faust.

along with them the proof of their being from God, because, as we have above seen at large, he foretold Pharaoh what he should do to punish him, and when he would again deliver him; nay, he sometimes permitted Pharaoh himself to appoint the very hour of his deliverance, and delivered him accordingly at the hour appointed.—Thus also Isaiah left it to Hezekiah's own choice, whether the sun should advance or go back ten degrees upon the dial, as a proof that what the prophet told him of the recovery of his health was true.*—Miracles of this kind carry conviction along with them that they are from God, because they show that the power that works them is altogether unlimited, and able to perform whatever is demanded, and in whatever manner,—which evidently belongs to God alone.

XV. Sixth Rule: "When miracles are performed to attest either doctrine conformable to the known truth, or, if it be new doctrine, not manifestly contrary to the known truth and subversive of it, it is to be presumed that the miracles are from God;—but when the doctrine is contrary to, or subversive of the known truth, it is a certain proof

that the miracles are not from God."

This rule brings us to the examination of a point of no small importance in this subject, to wit, whether or not, and in what manner, miracles are proved by doctrine! I find different authors treat this question differently, according to the point they have in view to prove, or to the light in which they apprehend it. Some argue universally that miracles are a certain proof of doctrine, and that their authority is independent of the doctrine and of the circumstances which accompany it.† Others again contend that miracles are not always of themselves infallible proofs of doctrine, but that the miracles and the doctrine mutually support and justify one another.‡

‡ See Houteville Rel. Chret. prouvée par les faits, liv. 3 8me diffienité.

^{* 2} Kings xx. 9.

[†] See the authors of the Vindication of the Christian religion against Rousseau, p. 173.

Both sides have reason, according to their view of the matter; but it is necessary to analyse the question, that we may see the precise sense in which the above rule

takes place.

First then, if a miracle be performed in attestation of any point of doctrine, and we know for certain by any of the above rules that that miracle is the work of God, - hen without all doubt such a miracle is a full, perfect, and incontestable proof that the doctrine attested by it is true. This we have proved at large in the preceding chapter, on the authority of miracles. In this sense, then, the authors of the Vindication have reason to assert, that true miracles, or miracles wrought by God, are certain proofs of doctrine, and that their authority is quite independent on the doctrine attested by them, or any circumstances attending it. Nor is it to the purpose to inquire here, what if the doctrine so attested be evidently bad doctrine, and contrary to the known truth? This. is an impossible supposition, for God Almighty cannot work a miracle in testimony of bad doctrine. If therefore we know for certain that the miracle is the work of God, we must be equally certain that the doctrine attested by it is his also.

Secondly, When we are not certain whether the miraculous act performed, be from God, or from Satan, but find nothing in the doctrine attested by it contrary to the known truth:—In this case the doctrine, though good, is not an absolute proof that the miracle is the work of God; because there is a possibility that Satan, who often transforms himself into an angel of light the better to deceive, may, by his agents, perform miracles 'n favour of true doctrine, the better thereby to gain credit and lead astray; but yet the innocence of the doctrine is a strong presumption in favour of the miracle, especially if there be no positive reasons to suspect it. This however is a case of which the solution will easily be got from the other attending circumstances, as some or other of the foregoing rules of the criterion willnever be wanting when the miracle is from God.

But, thirdly, When the doctrine is evidently bad, and contrary to the known truth, then this is is an undoubted proof that the miracle wrought in attestation of such doctrine is not from God, but, like the false doctrine it attests, is the work of Satan. This is in a manner self-evident, and a natural and necessary consequence of all the principles and reasonings we have laid down on the authority of miracles; for God cannot contradict himself;—he cannot use his power to promote falsehood, or patronize error. Whenever then we see that the doctrine attested by a miracle is certainly false, we have an undoubted sign that the dubious miracle is not the work of God. In this sense, what Houteville asserts is true, that the miracle and doctrine mutually support one another, namely, when we are certain the miracle is from God, but doubt about the truth of the doctrine; the miracle in this case undoubtedly proves the truth of the doctrine, and when we are certain the doctrine is bad, and doubt of the miracle, the badness of the doctrine evidently proves that the miracle is not from God. Upon the whole, then, it appears that this sixth rule of our criterion is, properly speaking, calculated solely to ascertain false miracles by false doctrine, when we are dubious about the miracle, and from what source it proceeds; but it is not alone a proper criterion to distinguish with certainty the nature of the miracle when the doctrine is good or indifferent. It was necessary, however, to mention and explain it here, because we find that Almighty God makes particular use of it both in the Old and New Testament for the direction of his people to guard them against seduction. It will be proper therefore to consider this subject a little more particularly.

XVI. When God revealed his law and religion to his people by the hands of Moses, he did it in such a manner as left not the smallest doubt of his being the author of it; the miracles he wrought were so stupendous in themselves, so frequently repeated, and in such circum stances, as to give the most entire convicting that they

were performed by God, and consequently that the doctrine attested by them was most certainly a divine revelation, and therefore true. At the same time Moses knew perfectly well that whatever attempts the devil would afterwards make to corrupt the minds of his people, and lead them off from the service of God by means of his emissaries, he never would be able to work any miracles in proof of his false doctrine, equal, or in the smallest degree, comparable to what he himself had done in favour of the truth; but that all the attempts the devil might make of this kind, would be only lying signs and false miracles; for this reason, then, he cautions his people against them, and the plain rule he gave by which to discover the falsity of such pretended miracles, and which was fully adapted to the meanest capacity. was the one we are here treating of, if they tended to lead them away from God's service: The falsity and evil tendency of the doctrine, contrary to the known truth which He had revealed to their fathers, was the infallible touchstone by which to discover the falsity of all such miracles. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul."* In these words we see, First, The case proposed, of a false prophet wanting to seduce the people from the service of God. Secondly, The supposition made, that he even works a sign or a wonder to persuade them to follow his seduction. Thirdly, The conduct which God demands of them on such an occasion, which is, absolutely to reject and not to hear such a prophet, notwithstanding his sign or wonder. Fourthly, The view God has in permitting such attempts to seduce

them; which is a order to try them, to prove them, and to see if they be faithful to him. From which we may justly conclude, that whatever signs or wonders such false prophets could use to enforce their false doctrine, they will always be in no degree comparable to those by which Almighty God established his truth; and that the doctrine they proposed being contrary to the known truth, this alone was a perfectly good reason to reject them entirely: Nay, in the following verse, God commands the seducing prophet to be put to death, notwithstanding all his signs, and gives this only reason, both for rejecting his proposal and punishing himself so severely, "because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, that brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage;"* thereby plainly insinuating, that their delivery out of Egypt amidst such manifest miracles wrought by the hand of God, ought by far to overbalance all the false miracles that might afterwards be wrought to seduce them from their allegiance to him

XVII. In the new law, as our blessed Saviour estabished his doctrine by miracles far superior to those of Moses, and to which likewise all those of Moses and the prophets concurred; for this reason he declares to us, by the mouth of his holy apostle St. Paul, that if an angel from heaven should come and teach any other gospel than what he taught—any thing contrary to the known truth so revealed by Christ and his apostles, and by them preached to the world; this circumstance alone was enough to make us reject him as a false teacher, and as one accursed by God + And upon these grounds he requires the same conduct from us as God did in the old law, in reference to false teachers: "If any man shall say unto you, lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.—Behold, I have told you before." The infallible rule

^{*} Deut. xiii. 5.

to liscover the delusion of their great signs and wonders, is, therefore, that they teach falsehood contrary to the known truth revealed by Jesus Christ, and established by such amazing miracles as greatly overbalance whatever may be afterwards wrought by those seducers in proof of their false Christs, and false doctrine. Hence we see, that this sixth rule of our criterion, though not directly calculated to discover true miracles, yet is a most infallible means to discover such as are talse, however great or amazing they may appear to be; and we see it is used and recommended by Almighty God in the old law, and by our blessed Saviour in the new, for this very pur-

pose.

XVIII. To these six rules which compose the criterion by which we may with all security judge when a miraculous operation is from God, I shall here subjoin the general character of divine miracles; which, though not an absolute proof if taken alone, yet, when added to the criterion, it greatly confirms its decisions. Now it is a just observation, that divine miracles, generally speaking, always tend to, and promote the good of mankind, either for soul or body, or both: they are the effects of goodness as well as of power: but those performed by the devil, are either indifferent, neither good nor ill to man; or, which is most commonly the case, consist in doing evil: they are the effects of power and malice, but never of goodness. The doing good to mankind with a view to promote their happiness, seems so connected with divine miracles alone, that when the emissaries of Satan or teachers of false doctrine attempt such benevolent works, even in the name of Christ, they are baffled and disappointed. Thus we are told, that when "certain vagabond Jews took upon them to call over them who had evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus, saving, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth: the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped upon them, and overcame

them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."*

St. Irenæus takes particular notice of this character of divine miracles in opposition to those of Satan. The heretics of his time attempted to gain credit to their false tenets by works of magic, which they vaunted of as miracles performed to confirm their doctrines; of these the saints speaks thus: "Moreover, the followers of Simon and Carpocrates, and whoever else are said to work miracles, will be convicted of not performing what they do by the power of God, nor in truth, nor to the advantage of men, but to their ruin, and to deceive them by magical illusions, and rather to hurt them by all kind of impostures, than to benefit those whom they seduce to believe their errors. For, they cannot give sight to the blind, nor hearing to the deaf, nor put to flight all the devils, except those whom they have brought on, if they even do this -And they are so far from raising the dead, as our Lord did, and the apostles by prayer, and as is most frequently done among the brethren, that they even think it impossbile." etc.

XIX. Another common character of divine miracles is, that they are generally performed by good men; men of known piety and great virtue. Nevertheless, we have seen above, that God Almighty may make use of bad men by whom to work miracles; and the bare possibility of his doing so hinders this general character from being entirely decisive in all cases; because the miracle may be true, though the agent want this character of known piety. It will readily be acknowledged, however, that the noted sanctity of the person who works miracles is a very great presumption in their favour; and also, that the working of miracles is a very favourable testimony of the sanctity of the one who works them. And as we have seen above, when speaking on the ends of miracles, that one of the great views Almighty God has in working them is, to testify

^{*} Acts xix.

the sanctity of his servants, and gain credit and authority for them with others; we may justly conclude that, though upon certain very extraordinary occasions, he may make use of bad men by whom to do wonders, yet this is by no means the ordinary conduct of his divine providence; and that, therefore, divine miracles, generally speaking, are performed only by truly good men; but if he who works them is of a noted bad character, this circumstance raises a very great prejudice against the miracles he performs.

XX. It will be necessary, now, before I end this subject, to consider some of the objections which infidelity has started against the authority of divine miracles; but this will be done briefly, as they are all answered before hand, from the principles I have laid down in this and

the preceding chapter.

First, they object the miracles wrought among the heathens: "There is not a single historian of antiquity," says Dr. Middleton, "who has not recorded oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles; many of these are attested in the gravest manner, and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace."* Therefore, say they, as Christians themselves own that no credit ought to be given to these miracles, or to the doctrines held by those who performed them, so neither ought any credit to be given to others, such as those wrought in favour of Christianity: This is the force of the objection, if it has any at all.

In answer to this, I shall not question the fact, but allow that real prodigies have been performed among the heathens; the only questions are, Were those prodigies performed by Almighty God, or by evil spirits? is it possible to distinguish from what source they flowed? The rules of our criterion will at once answer these questions, and evidently show that these prodigies were the operations of Satan; for, First, It is plain from their very history, that they were not such as exceeded what

we know to be within the reach of created power. Secondly, They were not performed in the name of the true God, but in the names of a multitude of gods, and in the belief of Polytheism. Thirdly, The authors of these prodigies and oracles were evidently enemies to mankind, demanding on numberless occasions to be hon oured with human sacrifices, and encouraging most impure rites and ceremonies, and approving the most shocking crimes, adulteries, incests, and the like. Fourthly, Such of these wonders among them as were the effect of art magic, were professedly done by the help of Satan, in plain opposition to the one only living and true God. These reasons evidently show, that the heathen miracles were not the work of the great God; whereas the contrary reasons as manifestly prove, that the miracles wrought in favour of Christianity were undoubtedly wrought by him; and therefore, that these last must have the utmost authority, whereas the former can have none.

XXI. Secondly, they argue that miracles are but equivocal signs of the truth of doctrine; because it appears from the scriptures themselves, that real miracles have been and will be performed in proof of false doctrine. Thus the magicians of Egypt wrought the same miracles in proof of their falsehood, as Moses did for the truth: Thus Christ himself assures us, "that false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if possible, the very elect."* Lastly, we are assured from scripture, that even anti-Christ himself will perform the most amazing prodigies in support of his impieties: Consequently, miracles, being common to true and false doctrines, can never be an absolute proof of the truth.

In answer to this objection, which infidelity endeavours to set off with great pomp and assurance, we must recall some of those principles we have seen above. The Christian religion readily grants, that superior

beings can perform numberless effects in nat are, which not only are miraculous with regard to man, but which are so amazingly great, that man could not with certainty discover from the work itself, whether or not it were possible for any created power to perform it; but we have evidently shown and established it as an undoubted axiom, that, "if Almighty God, for his own wise ends, should at any time permit evil spirits to perform any such operations in proof of falsehood, he is bound by his own divine perfections, to give mankind sufficient means to discover the delusion, and prevent their seduction from being inevitable."* And we have also seen in the rules of our criterion what those means are which divine providence has provided for enabling mankind to discover true from false miracles, and distinguish the operations of God from those of Satan: We have only to apply those to the cases in the objection, and its force vanishes in an instant. I dare say, it will not be pretended, that the miracles mentioned in the objection, namely, those of the Egyptians, of the false Christs, and of anti-Christ, were absolute miracles; that is, such as could be performed only by God, and which of course must be performed immediately by him. It would be absurd to suppose that, because it is evidently contrary to the idea we have of God, and of his divine perfections, to imagine that he can work absolute miracles against himself, and in attestation of falsehood, as we have proved at large throughout the whole of this chapter; it is therefore evident from the very objection itself, that the miracles therein referred to are only relative miracles; that they do not exceed the natural abilities of created agents, and that in fact they have the devil for their author: Hence the objection is quite inapplicable and inconclusive. What the Christian religion contends for, as we have shown at large, is, that absolute miracles which can have no other author but God, and relative miracles known to be wrought by him, or by commis

sion from him in attestation of doctrine, are most certain and undoubted proofs that the doctrine is his. If it could be shown that miracles of this kind were wrought also in attestation of false doctrine, then the objection would be unanswerable, and miracles, even true miracles, would be but equivocal proofs of doctrine; but as the very light of reason shows, that it is impossible Almighty God should either perform miracles himself, or commission others to so in attestation of falsehood, nay, as we have seen above in the rules of criterion, that it is impossible he should permit wicked spirits to perform any kind of miracles in proof of falsehood, when the circumstances are such, that mankind could not discover the delusion; hence the total insufficiency of the objection must appear manifest. If put in its proper light, the argument must run thus: The Egyptians, the false prophets, and anti-Christ, are said in scripture to work miracles by the help of Satan to attest false doctrine; in such circumstances, however, that human reason can easily discover they are the work of Satan, and not of God; therefore, true miracles, known to be the work of God, cannot be trusted as certain proofs of the doctrine in attestation of which they are performed. Every body of the least degree of common sense, must see the weakness and total inconsistency of such an argument; and yet this is what impiety and infidelity has proclaimed to be unanswerable. Now, that all these miracles mentioned in the objection may be evidently known to be the work of Satan, will easily appear by applying the rules of our criterion to them; for First, They are not said to be wrought in the name of the only true living God, but in downright opposition to him. Secondly, Those of the Egyptians and of Antichrist are expressly declared to be done by enchantments, and by the operation of Satan. Thirdly, 'The Egyptians were at last forced to yield the victory to Moses, when he performed miracles which they could not imitate, and to acknowledge that "the finger of God was there;" which was a fair concession that theirs were not done by the finger

of God, but by the finger of Satan Fourthly, The wonderful works of the false Christs and false prophets, and of anti-Christ, will be performed in defence of a doctrine manifestly opposed to, and destructive of the known truth; to wit, the truths which Christ has revealed to the world, and established in the most convincing - manner, by the divine miracles he wrought to attest them. Fifthly, These lying signs have been plainly foretold by Jesus Christ, and we are warned against them; consequently, when they come to pass, that is, when false teachers arise, proposing doctrines contrary to the truths of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to lead men away from him, and performing signs and wonders to persuade men to follow them; these very signs and wonders, instead of serving their cause, are their greatest condemnation, and the most convincing proofs of the truth of the Christian religion; for they show beyond dispute that Jesus Christ is God, who could foresee so long before what was to happen, and foretell it to his followers, and caution them against the danger. From these considerations it is evident that, when these things come to pass, God Almighty has provided mankind with a full and ample defence against the seduction, by which they may easily discover by whose power the things performed by false prophets and by Antichrist are wrought: and consequently, to draw an objection from these against the authority of true miracles performed by God himself, or of such as are done by commission from him, is altogether frivolous and inconclusive.

XXII. A third objection brought by infidels against the authority of miracles is taken from the incomprehensibility of the doctrines said to be attested by them. They ask, how can an event though ever so uncommon and extraordinary, prove a doctrine to be true, which appears to my reason to be absurd and contradictory!

This objection has been often answered to full satisfaction by those celebrated pens who have written in defence of Christianity; so I shall here only lay down briefly a clear explanation of the term, with a few ob-

servations on them, by which the weakness of the objec-

tion will at once appear.

- 1. A proposition is absurd, when the two ideas of which it is composed are contradictory and repugnant to one another, and incompatible, so as formally to exclude each other; such as these: A triangle has four corners; a gnat by its natural strength overturned a mountain; a man swallowed up the ocean; the man Peter is a millstone; a part is greater than the whole; and the like.
- 2. In order to know for certain that two ideas are contradictory and incompatible, we must of necessity be acquainted with their nature and properties; and therefore we can never rationally pronounce a proposition absurd unless we thoroughly comprehend the subject and attribute of which it is composed. In the above examples, as we perfectly understand what is meant by a triangle, and what by a corner, we perceive at first sight the contradiction between a triangle and four corners, and so of the others; and therefore, we justly pronounce them absurd propositions. But in this other proposition, wheat and oats may grow in the moon, we cannot rationally pronounce it an absurd or repugnant proposition; because, though we know what is meant by wheat and oats, and have a full knowledge of their properties, yet we have but a very imperfect idea of the moon, and little or no knowledge of its nature and properties; and though perhaps, in fact, the nature of the moon be such as to be incapable of producing wheat or oats; and consequently, though the above proposition be in itself absurd and repugnant, yet we cannot rationally pronounce it to be so, because of our ignorance of the nature of one of the subjects of which it is composed.
- 3. Propositions of whose terms we have but an imperfect knowledge, may either be apparently absurd and contradictory, or not. A proposition is apparently contradictory, when those properties of its parts which we know appear repugnant to one another, as when we say, There are two lines which, though produced ad infinitum.

will always approach nearer, but never meet: This according to our ideas of the terms, seems contradictory, although it is a well-known proposition demonstrated in conic sections. A proposition is apparently not repugnant, when there appears no contradiction between its terms, as far as we know of them; as in the above example, wheat may grow in the moon, what ever contradiction may be in fact between the nature of the moon and the growth of wheat, yet, in as far as we know of the properties of wheat and the moon, such contradiction

does not appear to us.

4. Propositions which are apparently contradictory are either comprehensible to the human understanding, or incomprehensible. They are comprehensible, when the mind of man can by study acquire a thorough knowledge of the properties of their terms, and see their truth and connection, notwithstanding the contradiction that appeared when they were only known in part. Of this kind there are numbers of examples both in the mathematics and natural philosophy, where many things when first proposed seem impossible and repugnant, till, by a further and more perfect knowledge of these objects, the repugnancy vanishes, and their connection appears. Propositions apparently contradictory are incomprehensible, when it is impossible for the human understanding, in its present imperfect state, to acquire a perfect and thorough knowledge of the objects of which such propositions are composed, or of their properties, ties and relations. Examples of this kind are chiefly to be found in supernatural things concerning God and eternity, where the objects are of such a nature, that it is impossible for man in his present state to have a clear and perfect knowledge of them and of their properties. Take for example this proposition; God is immense and perfectly present everywhere without extension or parts. According to the knowledge we have of the terms here used, this seems impossible; nor are we capable in our present state to acquire such a knowledge of the nature of God, and of place and of extension, as to see and

comprehend the connection that is between them in this proposition, which is therefore to us incomprehensible. In like manner, when we say, In one and the self-same divine nature there are three persons, clearly distinct among themselves, so that we can say of the one, what we cannot say of the other; this also, according to the imperfect idea we have of the terms used, that is, of the divine nature and of the divine persons, seems a contradiction; nor is it possible for us in this life to acquire such a thorough knowledge of these objects, as to see and comprehend the perfect union and harmony that subsists between them.

5. Propositions, though in appearance contradictory may yet in themselves be perfectly true, whether they be comprehensible to us or not. That a finite space, for example, may be divided into an infinite number of smaller spaces, appears at first sight a manifest contradiction, yet the truth of it is proved by a geometrical demonstration; that the leg of a parabola and a straight line produced in their respective directions, will always approach nearer and nearer to one another, but never meet; though in appearance it seems plainly repugnant and impossible, yet it is a well known property of the parabola, and the truth of it is also proved to a demonstration in conic sections. The same thing may also be shown in many other truths, both in natural philosophy and in the mathematics. And though in these examples we are convinced of the truth of the proposition, notwithstanding its apparent contradiction, and cannot refuse our assent to the evidence of the demonstration; yet we cannot possibly comprehend how it should be so, or acquire such a full and perfect idea of the objects as to see and comprehend the relation and connection between them. In like manner in supernatural things, that the superb fabric of the universe should be created out of nothing, without any pre-existent matter of which to be formed, seems, according to our imperfect ideas, so contradictory and repugnant, that human reason, unassisted by revelation, had laid it down as an incontestable maxim, that

"nothing can be produced from nothing," Ex nihilo nihil fit; yet we know for certain, from the testimony of God himself, that this was actually done; that the whole visible creation was created by him out of nothing, by the sole act of his almighty will; nay, human reason itself, being assisted by the light of revelation, can now demonstrate the impossibility of a pre-existent uncreated matter; however incomprehensible then the creation of the world may be, however contradictory it may appear to our weak reason, yet it is most certainly true in itself nor can the truth of it be called in question by any Christian, with any colour of reason. In like manner the following propositions, There is a first cause of all things, which had no cause of itself; There is a being which neither made itself nor was made by any other; God is immense without extension; God fills every place, yet is confined to no place; seem to us at first sight impossible, and are to our weak capacity incomprehensible; because we have only an imperfect knowledge of these subjects; and yet the very deists themselves are obliged to acknowledge them to be true and incontestable. It is plain then that propositions in appearance contradictory and incomprehensible to us, may yet in themselves be perfectly true, and many such are undoubtedly true both in natural and supernat ural things, as we have seen in the above examples.

6. We may acquire an absolute certainty of the truth of many propositions which are in appearance impossible and contradictory, even though we are in capable of comprehending the nature and properties of their objects, or of perceiving in these objects themselves their connection with one another. This is evident from all the above examples, the truth of which we know most assuredly, though it is impossible for us in our present natural state, to acquire a full knowledge and comprehension of their objects. We do not see the immediate connection between the objects themselves, because our ideas of them are too imperfect, and therefore it is not properly from intrinsic evidence that we know the truth of these propositions, but it is either from

external demonstration that this can be had, or from the undoubted testimony of those who are perfectly acquainted with the truth of them. Thus a scholar may be fully certain of the truth of the proposition, that there are two lines, which being produced ad infinitum, will be always approaching, but never meet, either by attending to the known properties of the parabola, and the demonstration thence drawn to prove it, or by giving credit to the authority and testimony of his master, who assures him of it.

7. In supernatural things the testimony of God him self is the most assured means to come to the knowledge of the truth of such propositions as seem to our weak reason contradictory, and are to us in our present state incomprehensible. To comprehend and have adequate ideas of supernatural objects is far above the reach of our natural capacity; our ideas of them are exceedingly limited and imperfect, and their nature and properties are quite of a different kind from what we are acquainted with in natural objects; consequently there must be innumerable truths concerning them, which we can never comprehend in our present state; nay, which according to our limited ideas may appear absurd and contradictory: But Almighty God perfectly well comprehends the nature of all these things: he knows all their properties, and sees all their ties, connections, and relations of whatever kind: On the other hand, he is a being of infinite veracity, and can never possibly deceive his creatures; if, therefore, he reveals to man any proposition concerning himself or supernatural objects. which seems to us contradictory, and which in our present state we cannot comprehend, yet this testimony must give us the most assured conviction that what he so reveals is most undoubtedly true; nay, it is by his testimony alone that we can come to any certain knowleage of these matters.

S. By the word mystery in the Christian religion is understood a proposition revealed by God, concerning himself or other supernatural objects, the truth of which

we cannot perceive in the objects themselves, by reason of our limited and imperfect hnowledge of them, which proposition is therefore to us incomprehensible, and may in some cases appear contradictory. The possibility of a mystery as here explained is plain from all the above reasoning; that God may reveal to man truths concerning himself and supernatural things, is not called in question; that these truths must be in numberless cases above the comprehension of our mind, is self-evident; that the limited and imperfect ideas we have of these objects, may in some cases appear to us contradictory, though the objects are far from being so in themselves, is plain from this, because we see it is often the case in natural things when we have but an imperfect knowledge of them; but that the testimony of God revealing them is the most convincing proof that they are true, notwithstanding such apparent contradiction, is a necessary consequence of his perfect knowledge of these

objects, and of his infinite veracity.

XXIII. If now we apply these observations to the objection raised against the authority of miracles, from the nature of the doctrine attested by them, we shall easily see the weakness and fallacy of it; for if the doctrines proposed as true by revelation, and attested by miracles, were to relate to objects which fall under our comprehension, of which we had full and adequate ideas, and between which ideas we evidently saw an absolute repugnancy and contradiction; as for example, should we suppose a miracle wrought to prove that a part is greater than the whole, or that a man is a millstone, or such like, which, from the adequate ideas we have of these objects, are evident absurdities; then it will be candidly acknowledged that no miracle whatever could ever be of any authority to render such doctrine credible; but then it is no less evident to common sense that a true and divine miracle never was, nor ever will be performed in attestation of such a doctrine. The doctrines proposed by revelation as objects of our belief, are all concerning supernatural things, of whose properties

we have but very limited and imperfect ideas; although then in the weak ideas we have of them there may appear any contradiction, we cannot on that account assert that they are in themselves contradictory; nay, by what we have seen above, many doctrines, even in natural things, are true notwithstanding such apparent contradictions; much more must this be the case in supernatural things: As, therefore, we are not capable by the utmost reach of the human mind to investigate the truth of these supernatural objects, or demonstrate it by reason, the only possible way to come to the knowledge of them is by revelation from God; and if God reveals them, and attests that revelation by divine miracles, it is evi dent there cannot be a greater or more convincing proof, both that such revelation is from God, and that the doc trine so revealed is most certainly true, however contradictory it may appear to us from our imperfect ideas of its objects. Hence then it appears that the fallacy of the objection lies in confounding a mystery and an absurdity; which it supposes to be synonymous terms, but which we have seen to be extremely different; and also in supposing that a miracle can be wrought, or is pretended to be wrought by God, in attestation of a doctrine evidently absurd and contradictory, which supposition is itself a most manifest absurdity.

XXIV. Before we conclude this chapter, it will not be amiss to consider the different cases that may be supposed between miracles and the doctrine attested by them, which will put this matter in the clearest light, and lay the whole of it before the eye in one view.

CASE 1. If a miracle, known for certain to be from God, be wrought in attestation of a doctrine evidently false or impious. In this supposition all authority of miracles would be destroyed; but this is a case which, as we have seen above, is manifestly impossible.

CASE 2. If the doctrine be evidently good, but the miracle dubious. In this case, though the goodness of the doctrine does not absolutely prove the miracle to be from God, yet it is a strong presumption in its favour

and greatly corroborates the other proofs that may be

brought for its being a divine miracle.

Case 3. If the miracle be evidently from God, but the doctrine itself dubious;—then the miracle absolutely proves the doctrine to be true—and entirely removes all manner of doubt, that might otherwise be entertained concerning it.

CASE 4. If the doctrine be undoubtedly bad, and contrary to the known truth;—the miracle wrought in its favour is undoubtedly a false miracle and doubtless the

operation of Satan.

MEED OF VOS. L.



Barret.

THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES DISPLAYED:

IN WHICH

THEIR NATURE, ETC., ARE IMPARTIALLY EXAMINED AND EXPLAINED,

ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT OF REVELATION AND THE PRINCIPLES OF SOUND REASON.

BY THE

RIGHT REV. GEORGE HAY, D. D.

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THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF MIRACLES

DISPLAYED

CHAPTER XI.

If THE Existence of Miracles is capable of proof, and of what kind that proof must be.

I. WE have seen before that miracles are possible; that they consist in certain sensible effects, which fall naturally under the cognizance of our senses; and that they are produced by the free-will and good pleasure of Almighty God, who being sovereign master of all creatures, can dispose of them in whatever way he thinks proper; either by his own immediate act, or by the operation of Angels. If, therefore, it has ever pleased, or shall please God to perform any miracle, one should naturally think it could not possibly admit of a doubt that its existence could be proved as clearly as any other sensible matter of fact whatever. It is, therefore, strange to see men of genius and excellent parts bewilder themselves in a matter which is obvious to the simplest understanding, and both waste their time and abuse their talents in working out thin-spun metaphysical sophisms, by which they pretend to show that the existence of a miracle can never be capable of proof. Their sophistry can have no more weight in the eyes of common sense than the well known argument of Zeno against the possibility of motion. If these gentlemen want to Vol. 11 .- 1*

impose upon their fellow-creatures, it is certainly an unpardonable insult to mankind; but if they really think as they speak upon this subject, it is one of the most humiliating proofs of human weakness, and clearly shows into what a depth of folly the mind of man is capable of falling, when, proudly trusting to his own abilities, he plunges without a guide into the endless mazes of his wandering imagination. From the task I . have undertaken, I am become debtor to the wise and to the unwise, to the learned and to the unlearned on this subject; and therefore, however unnecessary the present question may appear to common sense, yet, as infidels have boasted of the argument denying the possibility of proving the existence of miracles, it is necessary to put this point also in its proper light and to show the weakness and insufficiency of their objections. do this with the greater precision and clearness, we must distinguish two questions, and examine first, whether the eye-witnesses of a miracle can have sufficient proof of its existence?—Secondly, whether the existence of miracles can be sufficently proved to those who are not themselves eye-witnesses of them?—We shall consider these separately.

II. With regard to the first question, it is resolved into this, How far can we trust our senses in matters of fact, which fall entirely under their cognizance?—for if our senses, when applied to their proper objects, give us a full conviction that these objects actually do exist as our senses represent them; if our knowledge here is intuitive, incapable of further proof; if it be the very constitution of our nature, that we must believe that we feel these sensations which are excited in our mind by the application of external objects to our senses, and that the external objects which excite them do actually exist without us; then it follows, of course, that those who are eye-witnesses of any miraculous operation have the fullest and most convincing proof which the nature of things can possibly admit of, that that miracle does actually exist; and that this proof must give the most entire.

satisfaction; nor is it possible for any man who receives it seriously to doubt of the fact.—Now, that this is really the case,—that our senses do actually give us such absolute conviction in regard to the existence and effects of external material objects,—a conviction which is beyond the power of the most refined reasoning to invalidate,—I appeal to experience itself; I appeal to the feelings of our own souls; nay, I appeal to the experience of the most determined adversaries of religion. Let us suppose then that any of those unbelievers saw a miracle performed before his own eyes, for example, a dead man raised to life; a blind man restored to his sight; a man walking over a river upon the surface of the water without sinking, or the like, I ask him, would it be in his power to doubt of the reality of these facts? Could he, in his sober senses, persuade himself that the man whom he formerly saw perfectly dead, but now sees walking, speaking, eating, &c., is still dead? That the man whom he knew before to be absolutely blind, but whom he now sees to have as much the use of his sight as he has himself, is still blind, and sees nothing at all? That the man whom he sees walking upon the surface of the water, is in reality walking on dry ground? Would it be in his power, I say, by any effort he could possibly make, to persuade his own mind, that what he saw with his eyes in these cases was absolutely false, and that the reverse of what he saw was true?—I dare say, none will be so hardy as to say so.—But let him take in the aid of reason; let him summon up all the arguments he can against the existence of these miracles; let him advert that he sees no end worthy of God for performing them; that the facts are improbable, inexpedient, unnecessary; that the doctrine attested by them seems absurd, unintelligible, and contradictory; that the instruments are weak, vile, and unworthy the majesty of God to make use of; nay, let Mr. Hume himself appear armed with his invincible argument; let him bring in his uniform universal experience and put , it into the scale along with all those others; and let him

say, if he can, that all these reasons put together, would be able to raise in his mind the smallest doubt of the real existence of the above miracles, in opposition to the testimony of his own senses, if, as we suppose, he was an eye-witness of them. If he should say they did, common sense would laugh at his assertion, and if he was in his sober senses, his own heart would give the lie to his words. No! no! every man's experience and the conviction of his own mind will teach him that the proof we receive from the testimony of our senses in those things which properly belong to them, is an invincible proof, supreme in its kind, which needs no reason or argumentation, but convinces by instinct, and the fixed laws of our nature, with as much certainty as we could have from the strictest demonstration. Nay, when either from the disorder of the medium, or the unsoundness of the organ, or any other casual circumstances, we suspect that any of our senses deceive us in some particular instance, we have no other way to examine and correct this illusion, but what must rest at last on this truth,—that our senses, when properly applied, give absolute certainty about their proper objects; and that concerning these, we must trust our senses in preference to all reasoning whatsoever.*

The answer to our first question then is plain and satisfactory,—that those who are eye-witnesses of miracles have, from the testimony of their senses, the most convincing, full, and satisfactory proof that the miracles

they see do really exist.

III. Against this proof, however, of the existence of miracles from the evidence of the senses, I find two objections; the one hinted at by Rousseau, in these words: "If," says he, "we would receive as true all the mira-Hes which the common and ignorant people, through every country in the world, affirm to have seen, every sect would be in the right," &c. Here he would insinuate that the only eye-witnesses produced or producible for

^{*} See Beattie's Essay on Truth, chap. ii. § 2. † Volume III. of his Emilius, p. 111.

the existence of miracles, are the common and ignorant people, and that they are easily deceived, and ready to be imposed upon in such matters. But, in the first place, it is absolutely false that the common ignorant people are the only eye-witnesses producible for the existence of such miracles as Christianity appeals to: Men remarkable for their extraordinary genius and extensive learning, as well as for their veracity and candour, have given the most assured testimony of miracles, of which they themselves were the eve-witnesses. letting this pass, which is not so much to our present purpose, what Rousseau alleges, that the common ignorant people are easily deceived and ready to be imposed upon, cannot in the least degree weaken the evidence for the existence of miracles taken from the external senses, even though the common people were the only witnesses of them. Miracles are facts, which fall under the comprehension of the most simple minds; ignorant people have eyes and ears as well as the learned; they can know if a man be a cripple, blind, sick, or dead, as well as the greatest physician or philosopher; and if they see this man restored again to his legs, sight, health or life, they can discern that change with as great certainty as a Rousseau or a Hume could do, and can have as full and entire a conviction of it. I acknowledge, indeed, the ignorant multitude may be deceived; but how?-A designing person may gain credit with the many by an outward show of sanctity, and pretend secret communications with the Deity and his angels, as Mahomet did; or he may perform many extraordinary things in the eyes of the people, by his superior knowledge in the powers of nature, and persuade them that these are true miracles; or he may be witch them with sorceries, as Simon did the people of Samaria; but to make even the ignorant people believe they actually saw a fact performed before their eyes, which never was done, is what was scarcely ever attempted, and doubtless, though attempted, could never succeed.

Though men, says Mr. Douglass in his Criterion,* may believe speculative opinions to be true which are false, yet it is scarcely to be conceived, that they can ever so far deceive themselves, as to believe they saw facts which they did not really see. And this observation is true of all mankind, the ignorant and simple as well as the learned

and prudent.

IV. The second objection against the proof of the existence of miracles, drawn from the senses in those who are eye-witnesses of them, is made by Mr. Hume, and seems so strong in his eyes, that he thinks all the miracles alleged by Christianity can easily be accounted for by that means: "A religionist," says he, "may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality." + Here enthusiasm is brought in as able to invert men's senses, and to overturn the most constitutional principles of the human frame. Doubtless enthusiasm can go a great length in persuading men to believe for true what is false, and to esteem the whims of their own fancy, or even the suggestions of the devil, as the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; but I question if one single instance can be brought, where it persuaded any one in his wits, that he saw done before him what had no manner of existence; and, even though this should happen to the enthusiast himself, who pretends to perform the miracle, or on whom it was performed, are all those enthusiasts likewise who behold such pretended miracles? And yet numbers of miracles are upon record which were done in the presence of declared enemies, and of persons who could by no means be suspected of enthusiasm. Doctor Campbell, in his dissertation on miracles against Mr. Hume, answers this objection very solidly from this principle of experience as follows:

V. "That an enthusiast is very liable to be imposed on, in whatever favours the particular species of enthusiasm with which he is affected, none who knows any thing of the human heart will deny. But still this frailty hath its limits. For my own part, I cannot find examples of any, even among enthusiasts (unless to the conviction of every body they were distracted) who did not see and hear in the same manner as other people. Many of this tribe have mistaken the reveries of a heated imagination for the communications of the divine spirit, who never in one single instance mistook the operations of their external senses. Without marking this difference, we should make no distinction between the enthusiastic character and the frantic, which are in themselves evidently distinct." * In another place, after observing that the whole class of reformers, however useful miracles might have been to their views, yet never attempted to prove their mission or doctrine by these means. He then adds: "But how upon our author's (Mr. Hume's) principles shall we account for this moderation in the reformers? Were they, in his judgment, calm inquirers after truth? Were they dispassionate reasoners in defence of it? Far otherwise. He tells us: 'They may safely be pronounced to have been univer. sally inflamed with the highest enthusiasm.' + May not we then, in our turn, safely pronounce, this writer himself being judge, that for a man to imagine he sees what has no reality, to impose in this manner, not only on his own understanding; but even on his external senses, is a pitch of delusion higher than the highest enthusiasm can produce, and is to be imputed only to downright phrenzy? Since the world began, there hath not appeared a more general propension to the wildest fanaticism—than appeared in this island about the middle of the last century. 'Tis astonishing, that when the minds of men were intoxicated with enthusiasm—none are to be found who advanced a claim to the power of working miracles; a claim which in the author's opinion (Mr. Hume's), though false, is easily supported and wonderfully successful, especially among enthusiasts.

^{*} Part II. § 1

It is true, one or two frantic people among the Quakers did actually pretend to such a power; but it had no other consequences than to bring upon the pretenders a general contempt. In the beginning of this century also, the French prophets revived this plea—but by no part of their conduct did they so effectually open the eyes of mankind, discredit their own inspirations, and ruin their cause, as by this no less foolish than presumptuous pretence—and (which is particularly to be observed for our purpose) though they were mad enough to imagine that they could restore a dead man to life; nay, though they proceeded so far as to determine and announce beforehand the day and hour of his resurrection; yet none of them were so distracted as to imagine they had seen him rise; not one of them afterwards pretended that their prediction had been fulfilled. Thus even a phrenzy which had quite disordered their intellects, could not in this instance overpower their sen-

From these judicious remarks it plainly follows, that the evidence from the senses, with regard to the objects belonging to them, is not to be overpowered even by the rage of enthusiasm itself; and therefore, that those who are eye-witnesses of any miracle have, from the testimony of their senses, the most absolute and convincing

proof of its existence.

VI. This first question being thus solidly settled, the answer to the second naturally flows from it as a just consequence. For if those who are eye-witnesses of a miracle, can, from the evidence of their senses, have a full and absolute conviction of the reality of its existence, they doubtless can give testimony of this evidence and conviction to others who were not present when the miracle was performed; and by this means give those also, who did not see it, as entire a conviction of the reality of its existence as the nature of the case can possibly bear. The existence of a miracle is the exis-

tence of a matter of fact, which solely depends upon the good pleasure and free choice of God; and the proof of its existence must be taken either from the evidence of our own senses, if we see it ourselves, or from the testimony of others who have been eye-witnesses of it; for there is no other way by which the existence of such facts as depend upon, and flow from the will and choice of free agents, can possibly be proved, but by one or other of these two; nor can any rational objection be made against their existence, when properly supported by either of these proofs, but only such as strikes directly upon these proofs themselves, by supposing some flaw or defect in them. If, therefore, they possess all those conditions, which, by the very constitution of our nature, command our assent, an objection, drawn solely from arguments extrinsical to these proofs, can, in just reasoning, have no manner of force against the existence of the fact so proved by Now, as we have seen above that all the usual arguments brought against the existence of miracles, vanish like smoke before the wind, when opposed to the evidence of the senses in eye-witnesses, it follows of course, that if such eye-witnesses are people of veracity and probity, or have those other qualities which exclude all suspicion of deception, their testimony of what they declare they saw with their own eyes, must give the most satisfactory conviction that what they assert is true, in spite of all metaphysical sophisms to the con-. trarv.

We can come to the knowledge of facts past or absent, only by the testimony of others. It is impossible for us to acquire that knowledge any other way. But then the conviction and certainty we receive from testimony with regard to the truth of such facts, are in many cases as full and absolute as what we receive from any other source of knowledge in these matters which belong to it. Nay, when the testimony has its necessary conditions attending it, it never fails to give us the utmost conviction. These conditions are two, first,

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when we are certain the witnesses were not deceived themselves; secondly, when we are certain they speak exactly according to their own knowledge. When these two conditions concur, or when we believe they are present, it is impossible for us not to give credit to testimony given in this manner. We may doubt that the witnesses were deceived themselves; we may call in question their veracity with regard to us; but if we have no doubts upon these points, it is no longer in our power to doubt of the truth of what they say; we are determined to believe it and to believe it with the utmost assurance, by the very disposition of our nature itself; and hence Dr. Beattie, after some very judicious observations on this subject, justly concludes, that "To believe testimony is agreeable to nature, to reason, and to sound philosophy."*

VII. Now, to know when the testimony is attended with the two conditions above mentioned, sound criticism lays down certain rules founded on principles which are born with us, and which are the foundation of human society and of the whole intercourse between man and man, namely, That men are not fools and senseless:-That there are certain rules from which they seldom or never depart in their conduct:-That there cannot be a joint combination among them to deceive: That if they deceive sometimes, it is not without some motive, particularly interest: That the whole world never conspires to deceive any man: That no man candeceive the whole world. These principles are ascertained by the consentient reason of mankind, whose general practice is directed by them in the most important concerns of life; in proving genealogy, in settling property, in administering justice, and the like; and from them this general maxim is deduced relative to our faith in testimony, That we must believe in the testimony of men, when the facts testified by them being possible, we cannot believe they are deceived, or intend to deceive, without supposing that they are out of their wits.

[•] Essay on Truth, Part I. chap. ii. § 8.

VIII. "Our faith in testimony," says Mr. Beattie, doth often, but not always amount to absolute certainty. That there is such a city as Constantinople, such a country as Lapland, and such a mountain as the peak of Teneriffe; that there were such men as Hannibal and Julius Cæsar; that England was conquered by William. the Norman, and that Charles I. was beheaded of thes. and such like truths, every person acquainted with his tory and geography accounts himself absolutely certain When a number of persons, not acting in concert, hav ing no interest to disguise the truth, and sufficient judges of that to which they bear testimony, concur in making the same report, it would be accounted madness not to believe them. Nay, when a number of witnesses, separately examined, and having no opportunity to concert a plan beforehand, do all agree in their declarations, we make no scruple of yielding full faith to their testi mony, even though we have no evidence of their honesty and skill; nay, though they be notorious both for knavery and folly: Because the fictions of the human mind being infinite, it is impossible that each of these witnesses should by mere accident, devise the very same circumstances: If therefore their declarations concur, this is a certain proof that there is no fiction in the case, and that they all speak from real experience and knowledge."*

IX. To the same purpose Mr. Douglas speaks in his Criterion, or miracles examined on the force of proper testimony: "Two qualifications," says he, "must concur to establish the credibility of witnesses; a sufficient knowledge of the matters of fact they attest, and a disposition not to falsify what they know: And when these two qualifications do concur, we think ourselves obliged to admit what is attested as true." † Dr. Church also, in his Vindication, page 62. "It must be granted says he, that present facts, which are appeals to the menses, are more striking and satisfactory than any long

^{*} Essay on Truth, Part han ii. & &.

intricate reasonings: And hence miracles may be pronounced to be the shortest and clearest means of conviction of the divine authority of any mission and consequently of any doctrine to those who see them. And further, as we may have sufficient certainty of their having been worked in times past, they must if well attested, be full proofs, even to us who do not see them." But it is needless to multiply testimonies on this point, as every one's experience must teach him, that when we are persuaded a person is not deceived himself in what he attests, and that he truly speaks according to his own experience of the matter, it is no longer in our power to withhold our assent from what he says concerning it. Consequently, if any miracle be attested by those who were eye-witnesses of it, and in such circumstances as we cannot suspect their veracity, we have from their testimony a full and convincing proof of the existence of the miracle; a proof which as Dr. Beattie observes," it would be accounted madness" not to yield to; and which according to Mr. Douglas. "would oblige us to receive what was so attested as true."

X. We may consider this subject in another point of view, which will serve still further to illustrate it. It is, doubtless, a just and convincing inference, which is made from the effect to the cause; we see an effect produced; we know the cause which naturally and constantly produces such an effect; we argue, therefore, with the greatest certainty, from the known existence of the effect, that the cause producing it existed also. The testimony of men concerning any matter of fact, is an effect produced, of which we are sensible; we know this effect may arise from two different causes, and from no other; it may either arise from the real existence of the fact itself, of which those men were eve-witnesses; or it may arise from their mistake or imposture, as being either deceived themselves or wanting to deceive others. If we have any reason to suspect that the witnesses were either mistaken themthey give, then their testimony goes for nothing; it gains no credit; because it is not looked upon as an effect of the real existence of the fact attested by it. But if, on the contrary, the circumstances be such, that we see it is impossible that the testimony could arise from mistake or imposture, then it could have no other cause but the real existence of the attested fact, the existence of which we are therefore no longer at liberty

to deny.

XI. It is upon these grounds that the adversaries of Christianity pay due regard to human testimony, in all the ordinary concerns of life, and make no difficulty in regulating by it their belief and conduct with regard to all natural occurrences. But, being sensible what insuperable strength testimony has in favour of religion and against their tenets, if allowed its due weight with regard to miracles, they have been forced as their last resource, to make a distinction between natural and supernatural events; and, whilst they allow testimony its full authority in proving the former, pretend that no credit can be given to it when applied to the latter. "A miracle," says Mr. Hume, "supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument."* And again, about the conclusion of his essay, he says, "Upon the whole, it appears that no testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof." A little after, indeed, he corrects his too general assertion. and restrains the impossibility of proving the existence of miracles by testimony to such only as are wrough in favor of religion. "We may establish it as a max im," says he, "that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any system of religion." And, in a note upon this passage, he adds, "I beg the limitation here made may be remarked, when I say that a miracle can never be proved so as to be the foundation of a system of re

^{*} Essay on Miracles, p. 194.

ligion; for I own, that otherwise there may be mire cles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony" I am, indeed, at a loss to comprehend what Mr. Hume would imply in these passages, and am apt to think he is here fallen into one of those self-contradictions, which are so frequently to be met with in deistical philosophy; for, first, he tells us, as above, in general, that a "miracle supported by any human testimony is more properly a subject of derision than of argument;" if so, how is it possible for any miracle "to be of such a kind as to admit of proof from testimony?" Must we suppose he means that only such miracles as are in favour of religion, when supported by human testimony, are subjects of derision? But how then will he recon cile this obvious difficulty, that human testimony is sufficient to prove the existence of a miracle, when disjoined from religion, but becomes a subject of derision when used to prove the existence of the same miracle, if performed in favour of religion? Secondly, the whole force of Mr. Hume's argument throughout this essay, is intended to prove that the existence of a miracle as such, and independent of any connection with religion, can never be proved by human testimony. "A miracle," says he," is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined; and if so, it is an undeniable consequence that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony. A miracle, therefore, however attested, can never be rendered credible, even in the lowest degree."† Here we see, according to this author, that the proof against a miracle, "from the very nature of the fact," as being a violation of the laws of nature, "can never be surmounted by any proof from testimony:" How then can be reconcile to this "undeniable consequence" of

[†] Essay on Miracles, pp. 179, and 180, London edition, 1750, 12mo

his formidable argument, what he says in the note above cited, that "there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony?" Let him extricate himself here the best way he can; but this conduct shows his insuperable aversion to religious miracles proveable by human testimony, since he is determined to run the risk of having his darling judgment suspected, yea, and his common sense itself called

in question, rather than admit them.

XII. Dr. Middleton, in like manner, with all his adherents, is so averse to the force of human testimony in proof of miracles, that he fairly renounces the credil lity of miracles founded upon such evidence; and openly professes he knows no miracles, no revealed truths nought with the wit of man can possibly discover of the ways or will of the Creator, but by attending to the revelation which he has made of himself from the beginning, in the wonderful works and beautiful frabric of this visible world.* We shall see more of the Doctor afterwards.

XIII. We are surprised when we hear men of parts and learning talk in such a strain, which, if they really think as they write, is a palpable proof of their most extravagant vanity and presumption, whereby, with the utmost assurance, they set up the proud idol of their judgment, forsooth, in opposition to the dictates of nature and common sense, manifested by the concurrent sentiments of the rest of mankind; yea, in opposition to the declaration of God himself; whilst at the same time they cannot produce one sensible proof for their opinion, but either talk downright nonsense, and contradict themselves in what they say upon the subject, (as we have seen above in Mr. Hume,) or are obliged to pass the most extravagant censure upon the rest of mankind, and condemn the most pious and virtuous, the wisest and most learned of men.n

^{*} Preface to the Free Inquiry p. 22.

every age of Christianity, as a number of arrant knaver or downright idiots, which Dr Middleton has done in support of his unsustainable system. Nothing, therefore, will serve more to expose the folly of pretending that the existence of miracles or supernatural facts is not capable of being proved by human testimony, than to show now diametrically contrary it is to the common sentiments of all mandkind.

XIV. To begin with the people of God in the old law; how many most extraordinary miracles, which had happened in every age from the beginning of the world, were handed down from generation to generation among them by human testimony; and were, upon this evidence alone, believed with the utmost certainty. They therefore judge this testimony a full and sufficent proof of the existence of these miracles, and it produced conviction in their minds accordingly. It wil perhaps be alleged here, that these miracles were related in the sacred scriptures, and from them received the sanction of a divine testimony: But it is to be observed, that few of the people could themselves make use of these scriptures; copies of them were far from being common in their hands; nay, we read that in the reign of Josias, Hilkiah, the high priest accidentally found a copy of the law, and sent it to the king; and that he and all the people were amazed when they heard it read before them, which shows how scarce the copies of that sacred book must have been among them.* But, besides the divinity of this book itself, and consequently the truth of all those wonderful things it contains, whence did that veople receive it? Almighty God did not give to every generation new proofs of its revelation. The sacred penmen who wrote it, indeed attested that they did so by inspiration from God, and gave proof of this by the miracles they wrought for that end. This was a convincing proof that these books were divine to those who thus first received them; but it was their testimony to

their children, and the testimony of their children to those after them, which was the great channel by which both the divinity of the books themselves, and the miracles they contained, were handed down, and upon which they were believed by all succeeding generations.

XV. The case is exactly the same with regard to the whole body of Christains under the new law. age they have believed with the utmost certainty numbers of miracles, when they saw them sufficiently attested by human testimony. Every heathen nation, upon its being converted to Christianity, gives proof of the same thing; they, upon their conversion, believed as undoubted truths all the miracles related in the gospel. If they did so upon the testimony alone of those who converted them, without their working new miracles in proof of what they preached, then it is proved that these converted nations esteemed testimony a sufficient ground on which to believe miracles. If these preachers themselves wrought miracles to prove the divinity of their mission and the truth of what they taught, yet these things could not possibly be done before the whole people, and those who did not see them could believe them upon the testimony only of those who were present; yet whole nations were converted, and actually believed these miracles upon that testimony, which therefore they judge a sufficient ground for doing so. Nay, the obstinate heathens themselves who set themselves up to oppose the Christian religion,—who used every effort to their genius and learning to find, if possible, a flaw in it, never had the effrontery to deny its miracles; convinced by the strength of testimony they acknowledged them, and only sought to evade the consequence drawn from them, by ascribing them to the devil and not to God; but this very evasion shows how much they were convinced that testimony gives an undeniable conviction in proof of the existence of miracles.

XVI. Moreover this opinion of our modern wits is expressly condemned by Almighty God himself, who judges human testimony so thorough and satisfactory a

proof to convince his reasonable creatures of the existence of miracles, that he appoints this and this alone as the proper means to propagate the knowledge of those glorious miracles he wrought among his chosen people, throughout all succeeding generations. Thus, when giving commission to Moses to threaten Pharaoh with the plague of locusts, he tells him that he had wrought so many signs and wonders in favour of his people for this very end, that they and their posterity might know he was the only true God, and that succeeding generations must be informed of these things by the testimony of those before them. "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them, that ye may know that I am the Lord."* Again, among the many other excellent rules that Moses gave the people before his death, he says on this subject: "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons and thy sons' sons."+ Hence the royal prophet expressly acknowledges, that it was by the testimony of their fathers that they knew all the wonderful things God had done among them: "We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told us, what works thou didst in their days, and in the times of old." Here we see the testimony of their fathers not only taught them what was done in their own time, of which they were eye-witnesses, but also what had been done before their days "in the times of old," which they had in like manner received from those before them: Again in Psalm lxxviii. he declares his readiness to communicate the knowledge of the law of God, and of all his wondrous works to his posterity, in obedience to the command God had given for that purpose: "Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth; I will open my

mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done:" We see here the resolution the holy prophet makes to transmit to posterity the law and wondrous works of God, by teaching them to the rising generation; and he immediately adds his reason for so doing, "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children."* In this beautiful passage, we are assured that the testimony of each generation to their children, was the very means appointed by God for all succeeding ages, to ascertain not only the law itself, but also the testimony by which it was established at the beginning,-"those wonderful works that the Lord had done" in confirmation of the divine revelation of the law, when he first gave it to their fathers; and that God himself expressly commands this should be the means of conveying these things to posterity. What idea must every serious Christian have after this of the pitiful evasion of a Middleton or a Hume, pretending that the existence of a miracle cannot admit of a sufficient proof from human testimony, when we see that God himself appointed this to be the only means of proving to all posterity the existence of those miracles he wrought among his people?

XVII. To this subject also belong those other branches of human testimony, namely, the institution of feasts; the sacred ceremonies of religion; the erecting of public monuments, and the like, as memorials of miracles wrought on different occasions. Almighty God was

Psal. lxxviii. 1. &c.

pleased to make use of these things, and commanded his people to preserve the memory of what they signified, by explaining them to their children after them:*

Now this clearly shews that human testimony and its attendants were judged by the great God himself thoroughly sufficient to prove the reality of all those wondrous works he had wrought in favour of his people, and to perpetuate the memory of them for ever, and the event proves the efficacy and fitness of human testimony for this end, since it is by it that the memory of these things has been in fact transmitted down from those early ages in which they were performed, even to these our days; and we may safely venture to say, will, by the same means, be continued to the end of time.

XVIII. But all this will appear still further from the command Almighty God gave his people to beware of false prophets, even though working signs and wonders in favour of their doctrine, as related in Deuteronomy chap. xiii. For on what grounds did God lay his order upon them? We have seen above, that the stupendous miracles he had wrought in favour of his truth, when he first revealed it to them, ought so fully to convince them that he was the author of it, that whatever doctrine should afterwards be proposed contrary thereto, should, for that very reason, as being contrary to the known truth, be condemned and rejected; and that, though its teachers should work signs in its favour, yet the same reason should convince them that these signs were not from God, but from the devil, and therefore to be rejected along with the false doctrine in favour of which they were performed; for, according to the rules laid down in the end of the preceding chapter, when the doctrine is evidently false, being contrary to the truths revealed by God), and the miracles dubious which are

[•] See Exodus xiii. 8, 14, for the institution of the feast of unleavened bread, and the sanctification of the first born: also Deut. vi. 20, &c. for the meaning of the ceremonies of the law: Joshua iv. on their passing over Jordan: Numb.. xvi. 38, &c. for the establishing the priesthood. are 1 many other such.

wrought in favour of it, the known falsehood of the doctrine is the infallible touchstone to discover the imposture of the pretended miracle. Now, this obliga. tion of rejecting false teachers, even though working signs in their own favour, was not for those only who had seen the miracles wrought by God at the first revelation of his law, but for all their posterity in aftertimes, to whom the knowledge of these primitive miracles was to be transmitted by God's appointment, by means of human testimony. Hence, then, it is evident, that Almighty God judged human testimony, not only sufficient to convince after-ages of the reality of these miracles, but even calculated to give the people such a conviction of them, and of the truth of the doctrine attested by them, as would secure them up against the delusion of any false signs or pretended miracles, which might be wrought by Satan's means, in order to propagate false doctrine contrary to the truths they had been taught.

XIX. The same conduct we find observed in the new The doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ, and preached by his apostles, was supported, and confirmed, and proved to be divine by the miracles they wrought in attestation of it. These give such a conviction of the truth of that doctrine, that whatever doctrine is contrary thereto, we are commanded to reject and condemn as false, precisely because contrary to the gospel; and St. Paul pronounces a curse upon any one, though an angel from heaven, who should ever dare to preach any other gospel than what he had preached. Now this obligation will continue upon all Christians to the end of time, to reject every doctrine as false and erroneous which is contrary to the truth revealed by Jesus; but the miracles by which the doctrine of Jesus was proved to be divine, is conveyed to all after-ages primarily by human testimony; for that is the first step by which we come to the knowledge of the scriptures themselves, in which these miracles are recorded: Therefore, here again human testimony is judged sufficient by Almighty

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God to convey to us the knowledge of these miracles, and of the doctrines attested by them, with such conviction as to make us prove against the attempts even of an angel from heaven, should he endeavour to delude us

by any false doctrine contrary to the gospel.

XX. And indeed, if we suppose (which is certainly not an impossible supposition) that Almighty God should be pleased to reveal his will to man, and work miracles to actest that the revelation was from him, and should want that the knowledge of this revelation, and of the miracles attesting it, should be transmitted to future ages; how is it possible this should be done but by human testimony alone? Can a Middleton or Hume assign any other way of doing it?—Will they pretend a succession of miracles must be continually kept up in every generation, and in presence of every individual, in order to prove the original revelation? How ridiculous such a pretence !--Will they blasphemously say that the omnipotent being has it not in his power to transmit with certainty the knowledge of these things to future ages? How ridiculous, then, is it for them to pretend that miracles cannot be proved by human testimony, since human testimony, is absolutely the only natural means by which such facts can be proved to those who are not themselves eye-witnesses of them!

XXI. The result of all this is, that the only rational objection that can be made against the existence of any miracle must be such as strikes at the testimony by which it is supported; but if this stand the test, whatever metaphysical argument a priori and extrinsical to the testimony, may be brought against it, it can never, in the eye of common sense, have the least weight to influence the mind, or weaken the conviction of the existence of miracles which the force of testimony gives her: And yet upon examination we find, that all the arguments brought by the above gentlemen and their party, against the existence of miracles, are only of this kind gilded over with a turn of wit or ridicule, to make them pass with the multitude, and the better to

nide their intrinsic want of sense, and manifest defor-

mitv.

XXII. I shall say nothing here of Mr. Hume's boasted argument against proving the existence of miracles by human testimony, the futility of which has been a ready demonstrated to excellent purpose by several marterly hands. I shall only observe, with Dr Campbell, that one positive creaible testimony for the existence of a fact possible in itself, is of more weight to convince a man of common sense of the existence of such a fact, than ten hundred thousand millions of negative experiences against it; and this single observation,—which is founded upon positive experience, and feelings of our own heart,—saps at once the foundation of all that Mr. Hume has advanced upon this subject.

XXIII. The other arguments brought by the adversaries of revelation against our thesis may be reduced to these following:-""Miracles are unnecessary; they are inexpedient; they are incredible; they are trifling, and unworthy of the Deity; there are no ends to be gained by them worthy of such extraordinary divine interposition; the doctrine pretended to be attested by them is absurd," and such as these; from which they concluded that no human testimony can render them credible in such circumstances.—I do not know whether these gentlemen have ever given themselves the trouble to examine seriously the force of those reasons in which they so much triumph, or have ever applied them to any particular case, or even put them in a proper form, that they might see wherein their strength or weakness lay. If they had ever done so, I can scarce think that they would have . exposed their own judgment to the contempt which such reasoning must necessarily bring upon it; nor do I find, in their writings or conversation, any thing like a serious ratiocination upon the matter, but a laugh and a sneer, with the words incredible, unnecessary, inexpedient, no ends, and the like, interspersed in order to give a colour of reason to their declamation. But let us here examine the matter, and reduce their argu

ment to a proper point of view, that common sense may judge of its force and importance.—Let us suppose then a miracle,—for example, a blind man restored to the use of his eyes,—to be attested upon oath by three or four men of known probity, who declare they were eye-witnesses of it. Every man of ordinary judgment would be satisfied, by such testimony, that the fact was actually done; it could not be imagined the witnesses were mistaken, as it is supposed they knew the man to be blind before, and saw him perfectly restored to his sight; much less could it be thought that men of known probity would attest upon oath a matter of fact as eyewitnesses of it, if they had not had as great conviction of its existence as the testimony of their own senses could possibly give them: And if they be not mistaken in what they saw, and do attest it precisely as they beheld it, the existence of the miracle is an undoubted consequence. Let us see now the force of the above reasons against it, when put in the proper form from the mouth of a Deist; it runs thus: "Several men of probity have attested upon oath, that they saw a man whom they knew before to be blind miracuously restored to his sight; but this appears to me inexpedient, unnecessary without any good end, intrinsically incredible; therefore it is all a mistake; no such miracle was performed." The major proposition is the state of the case as attested, the minor is the very argument of the Deists; for sure none of them will dare affirm that miracles are inexpedient, unnecessary, or the like, in themselves; the most they can say is, that they appear so to them; and from this appearance they conclude as an unanswerable argument, that the best atttested miracles are all falsehood and fiction! How ridiculous do they show themselves by such a conclusion?—In order that a miracle well attested be falsehood or fiction, one of two things must be clearly proved, either that the witnesses were deceived in the testimony their senses gave them of the fact, or that they knowingly perjured themselves to deceive others; Now what connection is there between

the apparent non-necessity or inexpediency of the miracle in the eyes of a Deist, and either of these two points? Because the miracle appears unnecessary or inexpedient to a Deist, does it therefore follow that the witnesses were deceived in what they saw with their eyes, or that they voluntarily perjured themselves by swearing contrary to their conscience? How unworthy

of a philosopher to argue in such a strain!

XXIV. Their arguments from the pretended unworthiness of the ends of miracles, and from the pretended absurdity of the doctrine attested by them, I have considered more particularly above, when treating on the ends of miracles, and on the criterion; and have pointed out the grounds whence all their sophistry on these heads arises. I shall not therefore, repeat now what I said above, but conclude this subject by a few observations on what they say respecting the incredibility of the miraculous facts attested. One should scarce think they could be serious when they make an objection against the existence of miracles on this account; or at least it were to be wished they would explain what they mean by the intrinsical incredibility of a miracle. If they mean that every miraculous fact involves an absolute contradiction, or, in other words, that a miracle is in itself absolutely impossible, let them rest upon that in plain terms, and prove it if they can; but if they allow that miracles are possible (and we have clearly shown above, when treating on that point, that they are so,) how ridiculous is it to object that any possible fact is intrinsically incredible, when omnipotence itself is supposed to be agent !- Is any thing possible too hard for God to perform? Is any possible change in his creatures above his strength? Even Dr. Middleton, with reason, laughs at such an objection: "To say that where the facts themselves are incredible." says he, "such miracles are to be rejected, is to beg the question, and not to prove it; a too precarious way of reasoning—because what is incredible to me may seem Vol. II.—3*

credible to another."*—And Mr. Locke, whose justness of thought and strength of genius will not readily be called in question, is so far from looking upon the extraordinary nature of the fact to be an argument against its existence, that in certain circumstances he darws the contrary conclusion: "Though the common experience," says he, "and the ordinary course of things have justly a mighty influence on the minds of men, to make them give or refuse credit to any thing proposed to their belief, yet there is one case wherein the strangeness of the fact lessens not the assent to a fair testimony given of it. For where such supernatural events are suitable to ends aimed at by him who has the power to change the course of nature, there under such circumstances, they may be the fitter to procure belief, by how much the more they are beyond or contrary to ordinary observation."† This is a most just remark, with which we shall here conclude this subject, because afterwards, when treating of the continuation of miracles in the church of Christ, this objection drawn from the incredibility of the facts must be resumed, and more fully confuted.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE CONTINUATION OF MIRACLES IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST; THE STATE OF THE QUESTION, AND THE CONDUCT OF DR. MIDDLETON AND HIS PROTESTANT ADVERSARIES EXAMINED

I. We are now arrived at the last subject to be discussed concerning miracles;—a subject big with the most important consequences, according to whatever

[•] Remarks on the observator, p. 26, et seq.

[†] Essay on the Human Understanding, iv. 16, § 13.

way it shall be determined. Men of the greatest abilities and learning in this island, have of late years been deeply engaged in examining this subject, and have published many learned and elaborate treatises in defence of their several systems. Some with Dr. Middleton have contended that all miracles ceased with the lives of the apostles; some have asserted that they continued frequently in the church during the first three centuries, and till the Christian religion was established by law in the Roman Empire; others have extended their duration to the end of the fourth century, others to the end of the fifth; and some have endeavoured to show their continuation even during the sixth century; but all agree in asserting their total cessation at those periods which they are pleased to assign according to their respective systems. The Catholic church reposing, with an entire confidence, on the sacred promises of her divine spouse, and, convinced by daily experience that these promises will stand firm to the end of time, laughs at all these jarring opinions of her adversaries, and maintains in opposition to their self-contradicting systems, that the power of working miracles never was, nor ever will be withdrawn from her communion: that in all preceding uges, Almighty God has, from time to time, raised up many great and holy men among her children, by whom he has wrought numberless miraculous signs and wonders; and that he will never fail to do the same in all succeeding ages to the end of the world, in defence of his truth, as taught by her, to the utter confusion of all those who separate themselves from her communion. This constant doctrine of the Catholic church, if true, shows the folly of her adversaries in the disputes and contentions they have among themselves; proves that their systems are all founded upon a falsehood; that they run in quest of a phantom which has no existence, and take for granted, as the basis of their disputes, the very thing which is denied them. For if what the Catholic church teaches be true, that the power of working miracles has never

ceased in her communion, how ridiculous must it appear in her adversaries to pretend to fix a period at which miracles have actually ceased! Their jarring opinions upon this point serve only to illustrate her claim; and the arguments by which they prove the continuation of miracles down to their respectively assumed periods of cessation, affords her the most con vincing proofs to show that they have never ceased at all. It is not my intention to examine the comparative merits of those several systems; they all fall under the same predicament with regard to the main point. I acknowledge the abilities of their respective authors and abettors, in proving beyond reply the continuation of miracles during the several periods assigned by them, but must disagree with them all in the supposition on which they all proceed, to wit, that miracles have actually ceased after any one of these periods; and what I propose to prove is the truth of what the Catholic church teaches,—that miracles never have ceased, nor ever will cease in her communion while the world remains. But before I enter upon the proof of this important matter, it will be necessary to explain the state of the question; to consider the nature of the miraculous powers and their different kinds; and to examine what the scripture teaches us concerning them.

II. The Christian religion must naturally have met with extreme opposition at its first promulgation in the world, from the incomprehensibility of its sublime mysteries, which demand the most entire humiliation of our proud judgments; from the purity and severity of its morality, which requires a perfect mortification of self-love, and of all the lusts of our hearts; from the contemptible state of its first preachers, men of no character or station in life, and destitute of all human means to assist them in their vast undertaking, as well as of every earthly qualification that could recommend them to the regard or esteem of the world; from the deep attachment which mankind naturally have to the religion they have been accustomed to, especially

when it flatters their inclinations and lays no restraint on their passions, as was the case with Heathenism. when Christianity first began; from the pride and obstinacy of philosophers, whose darling tenets were all to be annulled by the pure doctrines of the gospel; from the inveterate malice of the heathen priests, and of all those whose interest was concerned in support of Heathenism, which it was the direct and declared intention of Christianity to overthrow; and above all from the rage and malice of hell, whose power was re strained, and whose kingdom was destroyed in proportion as the truths of the gospel gained ground, and which, on that account, used every possible means to crush it in its very infancy, and destroy it in the bud, by stirring up the whole power of kingdoms and empires against it. Now I assert that the extreme opposition which Christianity must naturally have met with, on its first appearance, from these and other such causes, made it absolutely necessary that Almighty God, its divine author, should stretch out his omnipotent hand in its defence, and, by miracles suited to the difficulties it had to encounter, enable it to conquer all these difficulties, and convince mankind that that religion was from Him. For, considering all the above circumstances, it was impossible it could ever have been adopted by mankind, if they had not been fully convinced that God was the author of it. St. Augustine justly observes that had this conviction been given them without the interposition of miracles, it would itself have been the greatest miracle of all. But Almighty God, who disposes all things with strength and sweetness; * who never fails to bring to pass by his Almighty power whatever he is determined to accomplish, and who always brings about his designs with the greatest sweet-ness, by means the most conformable to the nature of the subject he has to work upon, and most adapted to the end proposed, did effectually establish the Christian

Qui disponit omnia suoviter et fortiter

religion in the world in spite of all opposition, and gave mankind the most irrefragable proofs of its divine origin, by that profusion of supernatural gifts and graces which he bestowed upon those who professed it. Nothing could be more adapted to gain the end proposed than this was; for, by means of these supernatural graces, the Christians themselves had an internal experimental feeling of the truth of their religion. They felt the wonderful effects it wrought in their own hearts, the divine light which beamed forth in their understandings, the entire change of their affections which became detached from all the perishable objects of this life, and fixed on God and those eternal goods which their holy religion proposed to them. They experienced the interior consolation and delightful joys which the Holy Ghost communicated to their souls; the fortitude and strength he gave them to overcome all difficulties; nay, which made them even love those very torments, when suffered for His sake, which human nature most abhors. These were proofs indeed! -experimental proofs, which gave the most entire conviction to those happy souls who felt them, and made them at the same time the most proper instruments of convincing others, that the religion they professed was truly divine. In fact, their heroic fortitude under the severest trials; their amazing patience in the midst of torments; their profound humility; their admirable meekness and charity towards their most inveterate enemies joined to the stupendous miracles they wrought, gave such a force and efficacy to their words, as could not fail to make the deepest impression on the minds of the heathens which gradually undermined their prejudices and obstinacy, and at last converted them entirely to the faith and law of Christ.

III. The nature and different kinds of these spiritual gifts and graces are described to us by St. Paul, in these words: "To one indeed by the spirit is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same spirit; to another faith by the

same spirit; to another the grace of healing by the same spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of speeches: But all these things one and the same spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he wills."* The following explanation of them is laid down by the learned author of the Miraculous Powers of the Church, as taken from the best commen-

tators on this subject.†

IV. By the word of wisdom is generally understood the gift of prudence or discretion, in the use of all other spiritual gifts, so that they be not exerted out of due time and place, &c.; a point wherein some of the faithful were deficient, as appears from the fourteenth chapter of the same Epistle. By the word of knowledge, is meant a facility of expounding the doctrine of faith, as to lay it open to the hearers in such a method as may be most suitable to their capacity. By faith, in this passage, is meant not that theological virtue by which we yield assent to every revealed truth on the testimony of God, but a certain strong confidence or reliance on God for the working of miracles. These three gifts are not miraculous, but the third has a particular relation to the miraculous powers. By the grace of healing, is understood the miraculous gift of healing bodily diseases, either by the laying on of hands, or prayer, or by anointing with oil, &c. See Mark chapter vi. By the working of miracles, is understood the power of doing greater works than those last mentioned; as the raising of the dead to life; giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, &c. By prophecy is meant not only the foretelling of things to come, and the discovery of hidden secrets, but also the gift of expounding deep mysteries by the assistance of the Holy Ghost suggest. ing divers interpretations, which tend to instruction and edification. And if it be taken in this light, indepen

dently of the fore-knowledge of things to come, it is not properly miraculous though it belongs to the gifts which are called charismatic. The discerning of spirits is the gift of distinguishing the suggestions of the good spirit from those of the evil one. By the kinds of ton gues, is signified the gift of speaking divers languages; which was conferred upon the apostles, and some of the principal disciples in a more eminent degree, to enable them to preach the gospel, and to establish a reguler ministry in different parts of the world. To others it was given in an inferior degree, insomuch that several of the faithful were inspired by the Holy Ghost to utter the praises of God in a language themselves did not understand as appears from I. Corinthians chapter xiv. the intent whereof seems to have been to foreshew that the church of Christ should be spread through all nations, and speak all languages. By interpretation of speeches, is meant the gifts of interpreting what was spoken by another in an unknown tongue.

V. Now, two things are principally to be considered concerning these graces. 1. Their extension. And, 2. The manner and means of their transmission or commu-

nication.

With regard to their extenion, as they were the operations of the Holy Ghost in those in whom he dwelt; so we find that at the beginning, as many as received that divine spirit by the laying on of the hands of the opostles in the sacrament of confirmation, received also more or less of those graces, according as it seemed meet to him to bestow them. When he first descended upon the apostles, they and all the disciples that were with them received a very ample portion of them, and " all spoke in different tongues the wonderful works of God." The Jews being amazed at so extraordinary an event, St. Peter shewed them, from the testimony of the prophet Joel, that this was nothing but the accomplishment of what God had long ago foretold by that prophet; by whom he promised, that at the last days, when the Redeemer should come, he would pour out

his Holy Spirit upon all flesh, who would produce those admirable operations in his servants, as so many proofs, both to themselves and to the whole world, of the truth of his holy religion: The words of the prophet are these, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And on my servants and on my handmaids, I will pour out in those days of my spirit, and they shall prophesy,"* In these words, it is clear, that this promise was made not to some few particulars, but to all God's faithful servants on whom the Holy Spirit should descend: And a little after, St. Peter assures us, that it was made not to the Jews only, but also to those of all other nations, whoever should be called to the faith of Christ; "for the promise," says he "is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And, in fact, we find that this promise was generally fulfilled in all the faithful, Gentiles as well as Jews. Thus, when St. Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his friends, the Holy Ghost came upon them, though Gentiles, in the same visible manner he had come uron the apostles, "and they all spake with tongues."‡ When St. Philip had converted the Samaritans, St. Peter and St John went down from Jerusalem to confirm them, " and laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost," & who immediately produced in them the usual signs of his presence, so that all were sensible of it, in so much that Simon the magician, who "wondered beholding the signs and miracles which were done" by Philip, wondered much more to see the Holy, Ghost, by whom these miracles were chiefly performed, and along with him the power of miracles also communicated to all the people by the laving on of the hands of the apostles; and therefore offered them money to give to them the same power

[•] Acts ii. † Verse 39. ‡ Acts x. § Acts viii.
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they had, "that on whomsoever he should lay his hands the Holy Ghost also should come." In like manner, St. Paul finding certain disciples at Ephesus, who had not yet received, nor indeed heard of the Holy Ghost, no sooner did he baptize them, and "lay his hands up-on them, than the *Holy Ghost* came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."* The above citation from 1 Corinthians Chap. xii. shows, that these graces were very common among them; and they are also taken notice of in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, and in that to the Galatians. From all which it appears, first, that the extension of these graces was at the beginning of Christianity very great; and that they were generally bestowed upon all Christians, but in such order and degree as the Holy Ghost thought proper. Secondly, That this was done chiefly by means of the sacrament of confirmation, or the laying on of the hands of the chief pastors of the church after baptism: So that the apostles not only communicated these graces themselves to the converts along with the Holy Ghost. the Author of them, by laying on of hands, but transmitted also to their successors in office the power of communicating them to others successively, till the work of God should be accomplished. From the repeated testimony of the Christian writers during the first three ages of the church, it appears that these supernatural graces and miraculous powers continued to be bestowed on great numbers during all that period; and we find two very just reasons why they should have been so; first, because the necessities of the Christian religion were much the same during all that time. For, while the efforts of hell were joined with the greatest powers upon earth, animated by the most violent passions of the human heart to persecute, oppress, and destroy the Christians during the first three ages, it was necessary that Almighty God should not be wanting in such circumstances to stretch out his hand in their de-

fence, and continue his supernatural and miraculous interposition with them, both for their comfort and support, and for the confusion and conversion of their enemies. Secondly, Few or none embraced Christianity in those days of persecution, but did it from their heart. They had no worldly motives to induce them, no temporal views to persuade them; the sole conviction of its being the only way to save their souls, was the motive for which they embraced it. Hence they were Christians in good earnest, ready to sacrifice every thing for their faith, and therefore well disposed for receiving these supernatural influences of the divine spirit. But when the Roman emperors were converted to the faith of Christ.—when Christianity was established by law, -whan all persecution ceased, and it became even conducive to one's worldly interest to be a Christian, the face of things were entirely changed. Christianity being then defended by the civil power, and every worldly motive concurring with those solid and convincing reasons on which it was founded, to induce men to embrace it, of course it stood no longer in need of the general continuation of those supernatural influences of the divine approbation which had been necessary in the preceeding ages of persecution. Besides, from the concurrence of these same worldly motives, great numbers embrace the faith with other views than such as were purely spiritual, and carried a worldly spirit and corrupt heart even into the sanctuary of God; by which means vast numbers became Christains who were altogether indisposed for receiving those divine communications of the Holy Ghost, which had been so liberally bestowed upon the generality of the faithful in the three former ages. About this time, then, a cessation of miracles is acknowledged to have taken place, and is attested by some of the greatest lights of the fourth century: But what kind of cessation was it? It was a cessation of the above-named supernatural graces, both as to their extension, and as to the manner of their transmission. As to their extension, they were no longer communicated to the generality of Christains as they had been before, the generality of Christians were now become indisposed for receiving them; they were therefore bestowed now only upon those few chosen souls who, still preserving the primitive spirit of Christianity, lived with their hearts and affections, and often with their persons also, sequestered from the world, and sought only after God in purity of spirit. As to the manner of their transmission, because the Holy Ghost, when communicated to souls by laying on of hands in the sacrament of confirmation, did not now give these external signs of his presence which he had done at the beginning, by the appearance of fiery tongues, or by bestowing the gifts of languages. These as we have seen, were necessary while the church continued under the pressure of persecution; but that necessity was now at an end; and therefore though the communication of the divine spirit, and the confirming and strengthening those who receive Him, will continue to the end of time to be the never-ceasing effects of the sacrament of confirmation in the worthy receiver, yet this is now done in an invisible manner, without those exterior signs which were given in the earliest ages.

VI. Now, that this is the true nature of that cessation of miracles which is acknowledged by the holy fathers of the fourth age to have happened before their days. is evident from the express declaration of St. Augustine. This great saint having, in different passages of his writings mentioned this cessation of miracles, and well aware what use the enemies of the church would be ready to make of such an acknowledgment, thought it necessary. · in his book of Retractations, to explain his meaning more precisely, as follows: What I also said, that those miracles were not allowed to continue to our times, lest the soul should always seek after things visible, and mankind should wax cold by their freequency who had been inflamed by their novelty is certainly true. For when hands are laid on the baptized, they do not receive the Holy Ghost now in such a manner

as to speak with the tongues of all nations, nor are the sick now cured by the shadow of Christ's preachers as they pass by them, and others such as these, which it is manifest did afterwards cease. But what I said is not so to be understood, as if no miracles are believed to be performed now in the name of Christ: For I myself, when I wrote that very book, knew that a blind man had received his sight in the city of Milan, at the bodies of the Milanese martyrs, and several others besides; nay, such numbers are performed in these our days, that I neither can know them all, nor, though I knew them. could I enumerate them:"* From this passage it is evident, that the cessation of miracles, acknowledged by the holy fathers of the fourth century, regards only the extension and visible signs of the communication of the charismatic graces, when the Holy Ghost was received by the laying on of hands after baptism, or some of those more extraordinary miracles which were performed in the apostles' days, -such as curing the sick by their shadows, and the like. But though they acknowledge a cessation in this sense, yet they no less strenuously assert the continuation of the gift of miracles, and its actual exertion in numberless instances performed in their very days, and to many of which they themselves were eye-witnesses.

VII. Hence then, the question concerning the continuation of miracles in the church is only with regard to these last. We do not enquire whether the Holy Ghost continues now to be communicated at confirmation, with those visible signs of his presence,—the appearance of fiery tongues, speaking all languages, and the like,—which he displayed at the beginning; nor whether these and the other charismatic graces abovementioned be now indiscriminately bestowed on all the faithful. It is plain this is by no means the case, and it is acknowledged by all that a cessation of these took place before, or about the beginning of the fourth cen-

^{*} St. Aug. Retract. lib i. cap. 13. § 7. Vol. 11.—4*

tury. But the question is, Whether or not Almighty God has in every age of the church, down to these our days, raised up, from time to time, many holy persons, whom he has replenished with his divine spirit, and by whom he has been pleased, on many different occasions, to perform numbers of miracles for ends of the same nature, or similar to those, for which we know, and have seen above, he actually did perform many great and stupendous miracles by his holy servants under the Jewish dispensation, in every period during its continuance? This is the precise state of the question; and that Almighty God has actually done so, is what I have now to prove. But it will throw a considerable light upon our proof, and show still further the nature and importance of this question, if we first take a view of the manner in which it has been treated by Dr. Middleton and his Protestant antagonists, according to the different systems which they have espoused.

VIII. The Doctor every where professes the highest veneration for the Protestant religion, and assures us, towards the close of his Introductory Discourse, that his design in his work against the continuation of miracles, "is to fix the religion of Protestants on its proper basis; that is, on the sacred scriptures;" for these he professes the greatest regard, and on the credit of their testimony firmly believes all the miracles related in them, however great and amazing. He, of course, acknowledges that the powers of working miracles was bestowed on the apostles, and on others during the lives of the apostles, but insists that it ceased entirely upon their decease, and never more appeared in the Christian world; and the whole tendency of his inquiry is to prove as a consequence of this opinion, that "the pretended miracles of the primitive church were all mere fictions."*-'The motives which induced the Doctor to adopt this strange opinion were chiefly two; he found

^{*} Introd. Disc. p. lxxviii. edit. Lond. 1755.

that many of the doctrines and practices which Protestants condemn as the corruptions of Popery, were clearly taught by the Christian writers of the most primitive ages, and he enumerates several manifest and striking examples of this kind, in different parts of his Introductory Discourse. He saw, that if true miracles were allowed to have been wrought in a church which taught and practised these things, these things could by no means be condemned; and therefore concluded that it was absolutely necessary for the support of the Protestant religion that no such miracles should be allowed. Besides, he was sensible that if miracles in the first ages were admitted upon the credit of human testimony, notwithstanding these doctrines and practices, it would be ridiculous to deny them in after-ages, when equally well attested, merely because they were done in favour of the same or similar doctrines: consequently, that to admit their existence in one age of the church upon human testimony, laid him under an unavoidable necessity of admitting them on the same ground even to the present times; and therefore he concludes again, that it is impossible the Protestant religion can stand or be defended, if the existence of miracles be allowed, even for one single age after the death of the apostles. All this evidently appears throughout his Preface, and the whole of his Introductory Discourse, particularly from the following passages. In the Preface, page v. he says, "the general approbation the Introductory Discourse met with from those whose authority I chiefly value, has given me the utmost encouragement to persevere in the prosecution of my argument, as being of the greatest importance to the Protestant religion, and the sole expedient which can effectually secure it from being gradually undermined and finally subverted by the efforts of Rome." In his first entering upon his Introductory Discourse, he begins by observing the advantage the Roman church makes of the belief of a contin uation of miracles in her communion, and that his

system is the result of his inquiring into the grounds of this plea; "which system," says he, "by the most impartial judgment that I am able to form, I take not only to be true, but useful also, and even necessary to the defence of Christianity, as it is generally received, and ought always to be defended, in Protestant churches."

IX. A few pages after, giving an account of the motives which induced him to this work, he speaks, thus: -" I found myself particularly excited to this task, by what I had occasionally observed and heard of the late growth of Popery in this kingdom, and the great number of Popish books which have been printed and dispersed among us, within these few years; in which their writers make much use of that prejudice in favour of primitive antiquity, which prevails even in this Protestant country, towards drawing weak people into their cause, and showing their worship to be the best; because it is the most conformable to that ancient pattern. But the most powerful of all their arguments, and what gains them the most proselytes, is, their confident attestation of miracles, as subsisting still in their church, and the clear succession of them, which they deduce through all history, from the apostolic times down to our own. -This their apologists never fail to display with all the force of their rhetoric, and with good reason;—since it is a proof, of all others the most striking to vulgar minds. and the most decisive indeed to all minds, as far as it is believed to be true."* This is very plain dealing; the continuation of miracles in the church is the most decisive proof of the truth of her doctrine; but as this is incompatible with Protestantism, the only way to uphold it, is to adopt the Doctor's system, and absolutely to deny that ever any miracle was performed since the times of the apostles!

X. The connection between miracles and Popery [Catholicity] he observes as follows: "After the con-

^{*} Introd. p. xxxvi.

version of the Roman Empire to Christianity, we shall find the greatest part of their boasted miracles to have been wrought either by monks, or relicks, or the sign of the cross, or consecrated oil; wherefore, if we admit the miracles we must necessarily admit the rites for the sake of which they were wrought; they both rest on the same bottom, and mutually establish each other. For it is a maxim which must be allowed by all Christians, that whenever any sacred rite or religious institution becomes the instrument of miracles, we ought to consider that rite as confirmed by divine approbation."* And a little after, reflecting on the imprudence of Dr. Chapman and other Protestant divines, who, convinced by the force of that authority by which the existence of miracles is proved, have acknowledged and defended their existence for several ages after the apostles, he says, "Thus we see to what a state of things the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries would reduce us; they would call us back again to the old superstition of our ancestors, would fill us with monks and relicks, and masses, and all the other trinkets which the treasury of Rome can supply: For this is the necessary effect of that zeal which would engage us in the defence of them."†

XI. To show the great advantage which his system gives for gaining the end proposed by it,—of disarming the Catholics, and securing the Protestant religion, he says, "should the Romanists pretend to urge us with their miracles, and to shew the succession of them from the earliest ages, we have no reason to be moved at it, but may tell them without scruple that we admit no miracles but those of the scripture; and that all the rest are either justly suspected, or certainly forged.—By putting the controversy on this issue, we shall either disarm them at once; or, if they persist in the dispute, may be sure to convict them of fraud and imposture."

^{*} Introduct. p. lvii.

XII. So far the Doctor displays the necessity he saw of establishing his system, because it would be impossible to defend the Protestant religion, if any miracles are allowed to have been performed among the Catholics. What follows will show the necessity he was under of adopting his system even from the end of the apostolic age, because the invincible force of human testimony would prove the existence of miracles in all succeeding ages, if admitted in any one age after the

apostles.

XIII. Speaking of the nature of the evidence by which the precise time of the duration of miracles should be determined, he observes, that the generality of writers appeal to the testimony of the earliest fathers, but without agreeing to what age this character of earliest fathers comes down; and then adds: "But to whatever age he (the Observator) may restrain it, the difficulty at last will be, to assign a reason why we must needs stop there. In the mean time, by his appealing thus to the earliest fathers only, as unanimous on this article, a common reader will be apt to infer, that the later fathers are more cold or diffident, or divided upon it; whereas the reverse of this is true; and the more we descend from those earliest fathers, the more strong and explicit we find their successors in attesting the perpetual succession and daily exertion of the same miraculous powers in their several ages: So that if the cause must be determined by the unanimous consent of fathers, we shall find as much reason to believe those powers were continued even to the latest ages as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the apostles."* And a little after he adds, "As far as church historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history so constantly, explicitly, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of those powers through

all ages, from the earliest father that first mentions them down to the time of the refermation: Which same succession is still farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character, for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Roman church to this very day. So that the only doubt that can remain with us is, whether the church historians are to be trusted or not? for if any credit be due to them in the present case, it must reach either to all or to none; because the reason of believing them in any one age will be found to be of equal force in all, so far as it depends on the characters of the persons attesting, or the nature of the things attested."*

XIV. This uniformity in ecclesiastical history, in attesting miracles in every age, is still further acknowledged as follows: "It must be confessed, that this claim of a miraculous power, which is now peculiar to the church of Rome, was universally asserted and believed in all Christian countries, and in all ages of the church till the time of the reformation. For ecclesiastical history makes no difference between one age and another, but carries on the succession of its miracles, as of all other common events, through all of them indifferently,

to that memorable period."+

XV. After relating the sentiments of Dodwell, Whiston, Waterland, and Chapman,—who defend the continuation of miracles for some ages after the apostles, according to their respective periods,—and of Dr. Chapman who brings them down even to the end of the fifth century, he adds, "Thus these eminent divines pursuing their several systems, and ambitious of improving still upon each other's discoveries, seem unwarily to have betrayed the Protestant cause, by transferring the miraculous powers of the church, the pretended ensigns of truth and orthodoxy, into the hands of its enemies.—For it was in these very primitive ages, and especially in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, those flourishing times of miraculous powers, as Dr. Chapman calls them,

in which the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually sown, that they could not fail of producing the fruits which we now see. By these corruptions, I mean the institution of monkery; the worship of relicks; invocation of saints; prayers for the dead; the superstitious use of images; of the sacraments; of the sign of the cross; and of consecrated oil; by the efficacy of all which rites, and as a proof of their divine origin, perpetual miracles are affirmed to have been wrought in these very centuries."* He then goes on to give examples of all these in the earliest ages, ending with a rebuke to Dr. Berriman, who defends the miracles of the sixth century, as far as St. Gregory the great, for which the Doctor says of him, † "Thus the miraculous powers of the church are expressly avowed by him to the end even of the sixth century, in which Popery had gained a full establishment: yet this Protestant divine cannot conceive the least reason to dispute the miraculousness of those facts which established it; nay, defies any man to prove that miracles were yet ceased in this Popish age." From all which he makes this just conclusion, "Since the zeal then of these Protestant guides has now brought us within the very pale of the Romish church, I see nothing which can stop their progress from the sixth age down to the present-for each succeeding age will furnish miracles and witnesses too of as good credit as those of the sixth." And afterwards resuming this point he declares, that "by granting them (the Catholics) but a single age of miracles after the times of the apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties, whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves till we allow the same powers also to the present age." §

XVI It was necessary to give this extract of Dr. Middleton's sentiments in his own words, because it is in this that we clearly discover the origin and rise of his extraordinary system and the true motives which indu-

^{*} Introd. p. xlv. † P. lxix † P. lxxi & Introd. p. lxxxii.

eced him to adopt and publish it to the world. We here see evidently, that it was not a rational and consequential result of facts and just reasoning, but a preconceived opinion which he was forced to embrace from the impossibility of otherwise defending the Protestant religion. He was sensible of the insuperable force which the claim to miracles gives the Roman Catholics over their Protestant adversaries; he saw the weakness of every thing that had been said against them by Protestants, which miracles are allowed to have been wrought among them: he saw, in fine, that what Protestants call the "corrup-tions of Popery," are to be found in the earliest ages of Christianity, and that it would be ridiculous to allow the miracles of those ages on human testimony, and deny those of after-ages, though equally attested; and from these clear truths he concluded, that the "only expedient which can effectually secure the Protestant religion from being undermined and subverted by the efforts of Rome," was to strike a bold stroke at once, and absolutely to deny all miracles whatsoever, since the days of the apostles. This resolution being once taken,—which the necessities of the reformation obliged him to do, -the next thing was to find out such plausible arguments as might serve to support it, and give it at least a colour of reason. And here indeed it must be owned that he has done every thing in defence of his bad cause, which could possibly have been expected from a man of penetrating genius, extensive reading, and a determined resolution to use every possible art to support it. But as all preconceived opinions, which are not the result of just reasoning or accurate observation, but first adopted from other motive, are seldom any thing else than the airy flights of fancy, or the despairing necessities of falsehood, and when examined are found to be void of all solidity; so the doctor's favourite system, when brought to the test of sound reasoning, is found to be without any foundation at all, and productive of the most fatal consequences. This has been shown in the most satisfactory manner by learned adversaries of his own communion, who have at the same time, fully vindicated the holy fathers of the primitive ages, from the shocking character Dr. Middleton gives. of them. The Doctor grounds the whole proof of his system upon this foundation,—that all these primitive fathers, and indeed the most venerable Christian writers in all ages, and all church historians, are to be looked upon as a parcel of "credulous and superstitious fools, or a set of crafty knaves, possessed with strong prejudices, and an enthusiastic zeal for every doctrine of the Christian religion, scrupling no art or means by which they might propagate the same; and, in short, were all of a character, from which nothing could be expected that was candid and impartial."* In order to establish this point, with which his system must stand or fall, the Doctor has exhausted the whole force of his invention and rhetoric, but all to no purpose. His Protestant adversaries have examined him step by step; have detected his false glosses and sophistry; and have proved, beyond reply, that those venerable writers of the primitive ages, were men of the most unspotted characters, of undoubted probity and unquestionable veracity. They show that they were most competent judges of the truth of the miracles they related, having been evewitnesses of them themselves, or having had them from such as were; or, that the miracles were of the most public nature, and notoriously known to the whole people, among whom they spoke of them.

XVII. This alone is sufficient to destroy all the sandy foundation on which the Doctor has built his system; but his Protestant opponents have gone further, and shown most evidently that the following most shocking consequences flow from it: 1st. It destroys the faith of all history. He acknowledges himself, that, "as far as the church historians can illustrate or throw light upon any thing, there is not a single point in all history so constantly, explicitly, and unanimously affirmed by

^{*} Preface, p. xxviii.

them all, as the continual succession of miraculous powers throughout all ages." If, then, notwithstanding this concurrent unanimous testimony, we are to look upon the succession of miraculous powers as an absolute falsehood, how will it be possible to give credit to any historian whatever, or to believe any single fact attested by others, and of which we were not eye-witnesses? 2dly. It opens a door to universal scepticism. This is a natural consequence of the former. 3dly. It undermines the very foundation of the Christian religion itself. For if the immediate successors of the apostles who had been their disciples and instructed by them, were a set of "knaves and impostors," as he pretends, is it not natural to suspect (to use his own argument on a similar occasion) "that so bold a defiance of truth could not be acquired at once?" And, if this argument of his be good, we must conclude that these first impostors had learned their knavery from their masters, and of course that the apostles themselves were as great knaves and impostors as their disciples. Besides, since it is a notorious fact, that we at present have received the Bible as divinely inspired only upon the testimony of the primitive fathers and their successors; if these were all a set of crafty knaves or silly fools, as the Doctor represents them, and of "such a character that nothing candid or impartial can be expected from them;"—nay, such impostors that we cannot depend upon their word, even when relating facts, which they declare they saw with their own eyes; how is it possible we can believe the Bible to be the word of God, which comes to us only through such a channel? Or what security can we have, that such a continued succession of villains, who, as he assures us, "would stick at no art or means to propagate their principles," have not corrupted the scriptures, and imposed their own forgeries on mankind instead of the word of God? And if so, there is at once an end of the Christian religion itself, upon Protestant principles, which recognize the Bible as the only rule of faith and ground of religion!

XVIII. A Roman Catholic must make another obvious reflection, namely, that the Doctor's system, with all its proofs, is founded upon the most childish of all suppositions, a mere begging of the question; a supposition unworthy of a man of sense, much more of one who pretends to be a teacher of mankind! He supposes that the respect which Catholics, after the example of the primitive ages, pay to the relics of saints, that their prayers for the dead, their belief of a purgatory, invoking the prayers of saints, and the like, which he calls the corruptions of Popery, are really such in themselves; and that such doctrines are improus, blasphemous, and superstitious! It is upon this supposition alone he condemns all the miracles related by the fathers of the fourth age, "not only in general and for the greatest part, but entirely and universally as the effects of fraudand imposture." "In this age," says he, "all its most illustrious fathers, now saints of the Catholic church, St. Athanasius, St. Epiphanius, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ambrose, St. Jerom, St. Austin, and St. Chrysostom, have severally recorded and solemnly attested a number of miracles, said to be wrought in confirmation of some favourite institutions of those days, which, in the judgment of all the learned and candid Protestants, are manifestly fictitious and utterly incredible."+ Now, who does not see that this is a mere begging the question-a supposing and taking for granted what he ought to prove ! However incredible these institutions may appear to the Doctor and his Protestant brethren, they are far from appearing so to the much more numerous body of learned and candid Roman Catholics, who are surely endued with common sense and sound judgment as well as the Doctor and his brethren They receive them as divine institutions, and believe them as truths revealed by God; and among many other arguments which they bring to prove they are so, they appeal to numberless miracles attested by the most cre-

dible eye-witnesses in every age, and recorded in the most authentic manner as performed by means of these very institutions, and consequently in approbation of them. How childish is it then in the Doctor, when. instead of pretending to prove that these institutions are fictitious or incredible, he takes it for granted they are so, and upon this assumption alone would have the world adopt a system injurious in the highest degree to the characters of the most venerable personages that ever appeared in the Christian world, and big with all those absurd consequences, which, as his own Protestant brethren have demonstrated, necessarily flow from it! How glorious a triumph must it be to every devout Catholic, to see one of the most learned and most determined adversaries of his holy religion reduced to such despicable artifices in attacking it! For it is upon the above pitiful supposition that the Doctor argues and concludes that the miracles related by the holy fathers of the fourth age are all fiction and imposture, and by a pretence of argument as weak as its foundation, he includes all the miracles, related by those of preceding and subsequent ages, in the same condemnation.

XIX. But to show the sophistry of this argument of the Doctor's in its proper light, let us apply it to a similar case. It is certain that the mysteries of the Trinity, incarnation, original sin, and the other fundamental articles of Christianity, appear as incredible to the Deists and Atheists, as any of what the Doctor calls the "corruptions of Popery" can possibly appear to him, or to any other "learned and candid Protestant." But then the Doctor's argument in the mouth of a Deist against these great Christian truths; hear him haranguing against the books of the gospel, against Christ and his apostles, and reacting with disdain all the miracles recorded of them, for this plain reason, "because they were said to have been wrought in confirmation of some favourite opinions of theirs, the Trinity, the incarnation, and other such, which, in the judgment of all the learned and candid Deists, are manifestly, fictitiously, and Vol. II.—5*

utterly incredible:" What answer could the Doctor make to this argument? It is, in fact, the very argument used by the Deists against the miracles of Christ. and his apostles; and it is evidently the same, to all intents and purposes, as the one the Doctor uses against the miracles of their successors; and has precisely the same force in the one case as in the other. If then, he allows it, he must renounce his Christianity; if he con demns it, he, in the same breath, condemns his own darling system, and all those childish arguments on which he pretends to build it. What a comfort and satisfaction must this again be to every serious Roman Catholic, to see that even a Doctor Middleton cannot attack his holy religion but by such arguments as must, at the same time, sap the very foundation of Christianity itself!

XX. I cannot leave this subject without further observing, that the Doctor himself seems to have been very sensible of all the consequences which his opponents deduce from his system; for he calls it in his Preface, (page 1.) "an experiment big with consequences;" but whatever these be, it gives him no pain: "to speak my mind freely," says he, "on the subject of consequences, I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them as many of my profession are apt to be."* And when answering the objection made against his system, as rendering precarious and uncertain the Bible itself, he answers with the greatest coolness, "though we allow the objection to be true, it cannot hurt my argument; for if it be natural and necessary that the craft and credulity of witnesses should always detract from the credit of their testimony, who can help it? Or, on what is the consequence to be charged but on the nature and constitution of the things from which it flows? Or, if the authority of any books be really weakened by the character I have given of the fathers, will it follow from thence that the character must necessarily be false, or That surely can never be pretended." This is plain dealing indeed, but a strange kind of language from one who calls himself a Christian: But what can he do? There is no other possible "expedient for effectually securing the Protestant religion against the efforts of the church of Rome:" And, therefore, right or wrong—be the consequences what they will, this plan must be

pursued, and this system defended.

XXI. Upon the whole, then, we may observe of the Doctor, 1. That, from his very commencement, he proceeds upon a mere begging of the question, supposing the chief thing he ought to prove. 2. That his system is founded upon a most unjust and uncharitable defamation, not of one or two particular persons, but of all and every one of the greatest lights of the Christian worldmen revered in their days for their eminent sanctity and learning, and whose memories have been held venerable in all succeeding ages. And these he defames not in one century or two, but in every age, from the times of the apostles to these our days. 3. That the arguments he uses in support of his system, are just the same that a Deist or Atheist uses against the miracles of Christ and his apostles, or that a heathen would have used against those of Moses and the prophets; and their strength is exactly the same in either case. 4. That the necessary consequences of his system manifestly tend to destroy the credibility of all history, and undermine the authority of the Bible itself. All which has been proved beyond reply by the Doctor's antagonists, even of the Protestant religion.

Having thus taken a view of Dr. Middleton's system, and his manner in managing his argument, from which we have got some very important lights for our purpose, I proceed now to consider his Protestant antagonists, and see what discoveries can be made from them.

XXII. Those learned gentlemen of the Protestant religion who have appeared in the field against Doctor Middleton in this dispute, were all under one and the

same necessity of proving these two points:-That the power of working miracles continued in the church for a certain period of the apostolic age; and, That this power was entirely withdrawn after that period. As Christians, they were obliged to defend the first of these propositions; and, as Protestants, they were under a necessity of supporting the second. They saw the mortal stab which the Doctor's system gives the Christian revelation, and the other shocking consequences that flow from it, and therefore thought it incumbent on them, in defence of that revelation, to prove that miracles did most certainly continue in the church for some time after the apostles. But they saw at the same time, that if this power be allowed to have continued in the church without limitation to the present times, it would give an unanswerable argument in favour of Catholicity to the utter confusion of the Reformation; and therefore they were under an equal necessity of stopping in their career, and of confining the continuation of this power within such bounds as they thought most proper and convenient. And in these two points these writers all agree, notwithstanding the great difference among them about the length of time, during which * they allow this power of working miracles to have continued In this, indeed, they differ exceedingly; some as we have seen above, assigning the end of the third century for the era of the cessation of miracles, some carrying them down to the end of the fourth, others admitting those of the fifth age, and others allowing many true and real miracles to be incontestably proved, even to the end of the sixth century, One should naturally conclude from this dissention among them about one of the two great points of the dispute, that the arguments brought for the cessation of miracles of these respective periods, cannot possibly be conclusive; for, were the reasons for the cessation of miracles at any of these periods solidly founded, there could be no dissension; but all would agree on that era which was proved by the most conclusive arguments. Seeing,

therefore that they do not agree, but each combatant thinks the arguments for the era he assigns to be the strongest, this is an undeniable proof, that they are all equally inconclusive, and at best but hypothetical and systematical. But, however these writers differ in their conclusions, when we examine them attentively we find they are all the same at the bottom, and proceed upon perfectly the same principles, to wit, their aversion to Catholicity, and only differ about the time when the Catholic doctrines began. "No true miracle must be allowed after the corruptions of Poperv were introduced into the church!" This is the grand principle in which they all agree among themselves, and (what is chiefly to be observed) in which they also agree even with Doctor Middleton! But what are the corruptions of Popery? and when did they begin? In this they differ widely. To Dr. Middleton nothing is more plain, than that the sign of the cross; praying for the dead; mixing the cup with water; sending the consecrated elements to the absent; keeping the consecrated bread at home in private houses and for private use; looking upon it as a defence against devils; styling the Eucharist the sacrifice of the body of Christ; offering it up in memory of the martyrs; calling it most tremendous mystery, dreadful solemnity, and the like:" To the Doctor, I say, nothing is more plain, than that all this is 'rank Popery:' "What is all this" says he, "but a description of that sacrifice of the mass, which the -Romanists offer at this day, both for the living and the dead !* But the Doctor found all these things manifestly taught and practised by the fathers and Christians of the second and third ages,—by Justin martyr, by Cyprian, by Tertullian, whose plain testimonies he cites for that purpose; consequently, according to the idea he has of 'Popish corruptions,' and in conformity to the above principle, which he lays down in common with his adversaries, he is forced at all events, to reject

^{*} Introd. p. liii.

all miracles even in these early ages, and to maintain that the cessation took place just after the age of the apostles. Others who do not look upon the above articles as Popish corruptions, but think the sign of the Cross, which the church of England uses in baptism, may be practised without idolatry, and that mixing water in the cup, and even offering up the elements as an oblation or sacrifice, are consonant to primitive purity; nay, who even think that praying for the dead may be lawfully used, and who wish, with those Protestant bishops whom the Duchess of York, King James the II. of England's first wife, consulted upon that head, that this and some other points had not been put away by their reforming ancestors:-People, I say, of this turn of thought, and who at the same time have a great esteem for antiquity, and wish to have it thought that the religious principles they embrace were all authorised and followed by the Christian world in the most primitive ages; these of course contend, that as 'Popery' did not commence for some ages after the apostles, there is no reason for denying the existence and continuation of miracles during these pure ages; and the:efore they endeavour to prove this point against Dr. Middleton, by the force of human testimony, by the authority of the Christian writers, of the holy fathers and church historians, who flourished during the period they assign for their continuation. But it is particularly to be remarked in these gentlemen, that although they have no other possible way of proving this continuation down to the periods respectively assigned, than this testimony and declare it to be, in their opinion, a full and satisfac tory proof to that length of time; yet, after these their respective eras, they deny it all strength, and look upon it as utterly incapable of proving the existence of one single miracle. Why so? In the judgment even of their Protestant brethren, the testimony is the same afterwards as before, nor can any rational cause be assigned why it should not be of equal strength in both cases; but if it were allowed to proceed, it would favour the

Catholic religion, and therefore, be the consequences what you please, it must then be rejected. But who does not see that this is mere trifling, and a most convincing proof that all they allege upon this subject is nothing but opinion and prejudice in favour of a preconceived hypothesis, which each one assumes to him

self, as best suits his fancy?

XXIII. Hence it appears, that Dr. Middleton and all his Protestant opponents are in principle in the same predicament, and all build upon the same tottering foundation,—a sheer begging of the question, and supposing as a truth what they can never prove, and what is not only called in question, but absolutely denied, and looked upon as impiety and heresy by the greatest bulk of Christendom. Consequently, whatever weight this procedure may have against Dr. Middleton's system and argumentation, in the mouth of his opponents, it must militate with equal force against all their different systems; for, as they are all built upon the same sandy foundation, he and they must all stand or fall together.

XXIV. This, however, will better appear when we take a more minute view of their manner of managing their cause, in which we shall see a most exact conformity between them and the Doctor. The same arguments by which they show the falsehood of the Doctor's system, and prove that the power of miracles most certainly continued in the church after the apostolic age, will likewise show the falsehood of their own various systems, and equally prove that these powers most certainly continued in the church after the different periods which each of them respectively assigns. And the reasons, by which they as Christians pretend to prove, that the miracles said to have been wrought after their supposed periods of cessation, are all falsehood and forgery, have the self-same force in the mouths of Heathens and Deists to prove that the miracles thev * admit, and even the scripture miracles themselves are all of the same kind.

XXV. As it would be by far too tedious, and indeed

only an endless repetition of the same thing, to examine each of their systems apart, I shall confine myself to the one which is most commonly received by ti s generality of Protestants, namely, That the power of miracles continued in the church till about the end of the third, or beginning of the fourth century, and was then totally withdrawn. This opinion is adopted, and strenuously defended by Mr. Brook, in his Examination of the Free Inquiry; in which work he has displayed, in a very masterly manner, all that can be said in defence of this system, or indeed of any of them; for the arguments are the same in all, and only arbitrarily applied to their different periods, without any solid reason for appropriating them to one more than to another. So that in examining what Mr. Brook advances upon this system, we, in fact, examine all the others at the same time.

XXVI. I observed above, that those who have written against the Doctor's system among the Protestants, have chiefly these two points in view, and that their whole aim is to establish them, to wit, That the power of working miracles continued in the Christian church for some ages after the apostles; and that it was totally withdrawn from her at those particular periods which each of them respectively assigns. The first of these propositions they defend against Dr. Middleton, the other against the Roman Catholics. We must consider

them separately for the sake of clearness.

XXVII. In proving that miracles continued to be performed in the church for some time after the apostles, two kinds of arguments are used; the first is drawn from presumptive evidence, the second from positive testimony. The first of these shows, that it was reasonable to expect miracles after the apostolic age; takes away all such prejudices as might arise in the mind against them; and of course prepares the mind to believe them; the other directly shows that they were actually performed, and the two together give an entire conviction. "The miracles of the earlier ages of the Christian church

(says Mr. Brook) are probable in themselves; there is a strong presumptive evidence of their truth and reality. There is no sufficient reason to suspect that evidence; of consequence, when well attested, they are equally to be believed with any other common historical facts. They are not therefore to be set aside, where there is the unanimous testimony of credible witnesses, without destroying the faith of all history; without introducing an universal scepticism."* And a little after he adds, "If facts probable in themselves, the truth of which we have no reason to suspect from the nature of the thing, but on the contrary, there appear manifest reasons why we should believe them, are nevertheless to be set aside as doubtful and incredible, though supported by the unanimous testimony of such persons who lived in those very times, and were eye-witnesses of them; all historic evidence must rest on so sandy a foundation as to be utterly insupportable by human testimony.—There can remain no one rational and steady principle to direct us in judging of any past events represented to us in writing." This, then, is the sum of the proof used by these writers for the continuation of miracles in the church after the days of the apostles, -presumptive evidence, which makes it reasonable to expect them in those times; and positive testimony, which expressly asserts them.

XXVIII. This presumptive evidence, as displayed by Mr. Brook, for the three first ages, consists of the following arguments: 1. "If the hand of God did continue to co-operate visibly with the saints of the apostolic age, throughout the whole ministry of all the apostles, it is not likely that this extraordinary providence should vanish instantaneously, and leave the gospel to make the rest of its way by its own genuine strength. Such a supposition is utterly inconsistent with the natural notions we have of God's proceedings, as well as what is revealed about them—Whenever the

Supreme Being works any changes in nature, those changes are always made, not on a sudden, but in time, and by slow degrees; and in all the dispensations of his providence to the sons of men, as far as we know from reason only, the method of his proceedings is not hasty and violent, but ever gentle and gradual. The Jewish religion was established by an extraordinary providence. The divine interpositions in favor of that people were very frequent and notorious, till they had got quiet possession of the promised land, and till their whole polity, civil as well as religious, was effectually established; but even though such extraordinary interpositions became less frequent, they were not totally withdrawn; God still continued to show among his peculiar people, at certain times, visible and supernatural tokens of his almighty power and over-ruling providence.-And afterwards, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, when the frequency of these divine interpositions was renewed, it did not vanish instantaneously at the death of these two prophets; it was gradually withdrawn. Why then should it be thought an improbable thing, that God should act in the same manner in defence and support of the Christian religion? What reason is there to suppose that he should be more favourable to the religous dispensation of Moses, than to that of his own Son!"

2. Had the miraculous powers been immediately withdrawn upon the death of the apostles, it must have been of the greatest prejudice to religion; for, by this means, the gospel "must have been left in a naked and defenceless state to become a prey to the prejudices, to the malice, and to the outrage of men.—The immediate successors of the apostles must have fallen into the utmost discouragement, discontent and despondency of mind, seeing they had the same difficulties to struggle with as those before them, from a malicious and perverse world; and yet, perceiving they had none of those powers and assistances to relieve and support them which had been of late so liberally bestowed upon the disciples of Jesus in the preceding age: What an ob-

struction must this experience have occasioned to the furtherance of the gospel? What an avertion to it must it have caused in some! What apostacy in others? What dejection; what murmuring; what despair in all? Let a man seriously and impartially reflect on these things, and then judge, whether it be not probable, that the same extraordinary providence which accompanied the apostles and other Christians upon the first preaching of the gospel, continued to exert itself in their favour during the whole ministry of the apostles; and whether, upon the death of them, it is likely that it should cease at once, and not rather that it visibly resided in the Christian church some time afterwards, and was at last gradually withdrawn, as the real exigencies of the church were constantly and by degrees lessening, and the continuance of it made by that means less and less

necessary."

3. "The necessity of divine interpositions in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs in those earlier ages of the church, make it reasonable to believe, that the same extraordinary providence, by which these things were regulated during the lives of the apostles, did continue to direct and encourage the Christians some time afterwards. It was a thing of the greatest consequence in the infancy of the gospel, that no person should be admitted to any high office in the church, but such only as were properly qualified. Nothing could have given greater offence to the Christian converts; nothing could have brought a more just imputation upon the apostles themselves, or have been a more reasonable obstruction to the success of their labours, both among Jews and Gentiles, than to have observed such persons dignified with the most eminent parts of the ministry, who were either of bad principles or exceptionable conduct." Now this could never have been avoided, except either "the apostles had been endowed with some extraordinary powers in making choice of pastors to succeed them, or some visible manifestations of the spirit of God had appeared at their appointment," as

was the case when Saul and Barnabas were separated by the Holy Ghost, for the work to which he called them; or that the persons chosen had been eminent for their extraordinary graces, and endowed with power from above, as were Stephen and Phillip, the deacons: As therefore the same necessity of holy pastors continued for the ages after the apostles as had been in their days, "May we not fairly conclude, from the great expediency and necessity of the thing, that the immediate successors of the apostles were assisted by the same extraordinary means, and possessed of the same extraordinery powers? Is it to be imagined, that the providence of God, which was so profuse of its extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers during the lives of the apostles, as even to impart them to numbers of the laity and the lowest of the people, should immediately, after their deaths, become so sparing of them, as to refuse them even to the most eminently distinguished among the Christians for their superior piety and virtue, and to whom the whole management of the church discipline, and the defence and support of the Christian cause, were entirely committed?"

4. The circumstances of those times confirm all the above: "The Christians were surrounded on all sides with the most inveterate enemies, and situated in the midst of a people wholly devoted to the grossest and most determined bigotry and superstition, and totally abandoned to the greatest profligacy of manners. The doctrines of the Christians, which have so great a contrariety to the passions and prejudices of men, exposed them every where to the greatest ignominy and contempt, and brought on them a train of the severest calamities, which the most virulent malice, inflamed and exasperated with the most outrageous zeal, as well civil as religious, could contrive, Now, if ever God has visibly interposed in the affairs of men, is it to be supposed that, in such circumstances, this same Almighty Being would suffer his most faithful servants to be exposed to such cruelty, merely on account of their fidelity

to him, without giving them any manifestations of his power and presence for their comfort and support?" Or how is it possible that his religion should have subsisted without them? How much more impossible would it be still that it should, in these circumstances, have made proselytes of its very enemies, yea, and triumphed at last over all its adversaries, if it had not been supported by visible interpositions of the divine approbation? Human nature, left to itself, must have sunk under the pressure of such a complication of misery, and been at last absolutely overpowered by such heavy and weighty calamities. Under these circumstances, therefore, nothing appears sufficient to account for the uncommon progress of the Christian religion, but frequent and visible interpositions of the Deity. Doctor Middleton allows, in his preface, that, "in the first planting of the gospel, miraculous powers were wanting to enable the apostles the more easily to overrule the inveterate prejudices, both of Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging shocks of popular rage and persecution." May it not then reasonably be presumed, that the same extraordinary powers were continued after the apostles' days, while the same, and even greater prejudices continued, and while the popular rage and persecutions were even more violent?

5. The behavior of the primitive martyrs is another strong proof of the same thing. Their courage, constancy and patience, accompanied with that astonishing spirit of meekness, humility, charity, and joy, discoverable in the midst of their extreme misery, and of the most exquisite tortures, clearly point out to us that there must have been a divine and supernatural power bestowed upon them, which could support them in such trying circumstances, and raise up human weakness to such amazing and heroic fortitude. Mr. Brook dwells a long time upon this argument taken from the martyrs, but what is here observed I take to be the strength of

what he says.

XXIX. After displaying these presumptive arguments, Vol. II.—6*

ne concludes thus, "Dr Middleton, and every other man who professes himself a Christian, must allow, that miracles were wrought in great abundance during the lives of the apostles; and that the Christian religion was at first published and propagated by an extraordinary providence. The question then will be, Whether we have any probability of reason to conclude, that the same extraordinary providence did continue after their decease? If the probability of an event is to be determined by the likelihood of its happening, and if that thing is allowed to be likely to happen, which has frequently, and in a variety of instances, already come to pass: then it may reasonably be presumed, that, if there were frequent interpositions of the Deity in the times of the apostles for manifest and important reasons, it is likely that, in the ages immediately succeeding to the apostolic, the same extraordinary interpositions should be continued, in similar cases, and where the same manifest and important reasons present themselves. 'Probability,' according to Mr. Hume in his essay on miracles, 'rises from a superiority of chances on any side; and according as this superiority increases and surpasses the opposite chances, the probability receiveth a proportionable increase, and begets a higher degree of belief or assent on that side in which we discover the superiority.' Therefore, where an event has been frequently brought about, in particular circumstances, there is a probability of the same event being brought about again, in similar circumstances." In this manner Mr. Brook displays the presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles in the church during the first three ages, the period he assigns for their existence.

XXX. On taking a view of these reasons it appears, that they may be all reduced to this one; the exigencies and needs of the Christian church, in the particular circumstances of these primitive ages, made it becoming the divine providence to assist and protect her by supernatural and miraculous interpositions; therefore it is reasonable to believe he did so, especially as it is

acknowledged this was the case in the apostolic age, when the circumstances were similar.

XXXI. The same presumptive arguments are made use of by the other writers on this subject, only extending their energy each to the particular period which he thinks fit to assign for the continuation of miracles, as Mr. Brook here does to the first three ages. be observed," says the Observator on the introductory discourse, p. 25, "that this promise (viz. of working miracles) was not made to the apostles personally, but to them that should believe through their preaching, without any limitation of time for the continuance of these powers to their days. And when it is considered how great a part of the heathen world remained unconverted after their days, it is no unreasonable supposition that these powers did not expire with the apostles, but were continued to their successors, in the work of propagating the gospel." To the same purpose, Le Moine in the postscript to his work on miracles, says, "Our Saviour, before he left the world, promises these powers, not only to the apostles, but to private Christians-And as Christ's promise is without any limitation of time, we may reasonably suppose that they lasted as long as the church had an immediate occasion for them, such as the farther conversion of the world—It is therefore highly probable, if not absolutely certain that they did actually subsist in the church for some considerable time after the days of the apostles." Thus these Protestant adversaries of Dr. Middleton's system all agree in this principle, that the presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles, drawn from the exigencies and necessities of the church during the different periods they assign, is just and reasonable, and affords a very high probability that they actually did exist during these ages.

XXXII. But what is most surprising, even Dr. Mid dleton himself agrees with them in this principle, and readily admits the force of this presumptive evidence for proof of the existence of miracles; only he craves

the same liberty which they take of admitting its force during such a period of time as he thinks proper, and no farther; that is, he confines it to the apostolic age alone, instead of extending it to any succeeding era, as they do. Let us hear his own words: "My opinion," says he, "in short is this, that in those first efforts of planting the gospel, after our Lord's ascension, the extraordinary gifts which he had promised were poured out in the fullest measure on the apostles, and those other disciples whom he had ordained to be the primary instruments of that great work, in order to enable them more easily to overrule the inveterate prejudices both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging shocks of popular rage and persecution which they were taught to expect in the noviciate of their ministry. But in process of time, when they had laid a foundation sufficient to sustain the great fabric designed to be erected upon it, and by an invincible courage had conquered the first and principal difficulties, and planted churches in all the chief cities of the Roman empire, and settled a regular ministry to succeed them in the government of the same: it may reasonably be presumed, that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be less and less wanted, in proportion to the increase of those churches, so the use and exercise of them began gradually to decline: And as soon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world, that they were finally withdrawn, and the gospel left to make the rest of its way by its own genuine strength, and the natural force of those divine graces with which it was so richly stored, Faith, Hope, and Charity.—And all this, as far as I am able to judge from the nature of the gifts themselves, and from the instances or effects of them which I have any way observed, may probably be thought to have happened while some of the apostles were still living, who, even in the times of the gospel, appear, on several occasions, to have been destitute of any extraordinary gifts: And of whose miracles, when we go beyond

the limits of the gospel, we meet with nothing in the latter histories on which we can depend, or nothing

rather but what is apparently fabulous."*

XXXIII. In these words the Doctor fairly acknowledges the three principal presumptive arguments used, as above, by Mr. Brook; he grants that a sudden change from the plentitude of miracles, wrought at first by the apostles, to a total cessation of them, is not to be supposed; and therefore alleges that these powers were withdrawn gradually. He confesses that the necessities of the gospel at its first appearance afford a just presumption to believe that these powers continued till it was sufficiently established, and he allows that the circumstances of the times, at the first publication of the gospel, made miracles necessary to overrule the prejudices and difficulties it had to encounter. The only difference is, that he confines these necessities of the church within the narrow bounds of the apostolic age; whereas Mr. Brook extends them to the first three centuries, as others do to the end of the fourth, fifth, or sixth. To act consequentially, then, the Doctor must give some solid reasons why these presumptive arguments, which he allows to have had so much weight in the first age, should have none at all after that period. The reasons he gives we shall now examine, and see the replies made to them by his adversaries.

XXXIV. His first reason is against the argument drawn from the necessities of the gospel, and consists of a piece of raillery, a weapon which is occasionally of very great service, especially in a bad cause: "They," says he, speaking of those who extend the promises of Christ regarding miracles beyond the period he assigns, "they appeal indeed to the text—where, though there is not the least hint of any particular time for which they, (miracles) were to last, yet this they supply from their own imagination, and by the help of a postulatum, which all people will grant, that they continued as long

^{*} Pref to the Inq., p 26.

as they were necessary to the church, they presently extend that necessity to what length they please, or as far as they find it agreeable to the several systems, which they had previously entertained about them."* To this ironical objection I find no direct reply made by such of the Doctor's adversaries as I have had occasion to see, I will observe, however, that he here fairly grants, that they are all guilty of what I laid to their charge above, to wit, of first adopting their particular systems, and then seeking reasons to support them. We have seen before that this is the very case with the Doctor himself, and that, therefore, he and they are all the same in principle, and must stand or fall together. Hence we find, that the very arguments they use against one another, are with equal force retorted against themselves. In the promises which our Saviour made of miraculous powers to his disciples, as there is not the least hint respecting any particular time of their extension, so neither is there of their limitation. The argument may, therefore, be justly retorical on the Doctor in his own words, as follows: "This limitation he supplies from his own imagination, and by the help of a postulatum, which all people will grant, 'that miracles continued as long as they were necessary to the church and no longer:' he presently limits that necessity to the apostolic age, as he found that most agreeable to the system he had previously entertained about them." And from this it is plain, that the pretended necessity which they all appeal to, is a mere nose of wax that may be twisted about to any side these gentlemen please to turn it.

XXXV. His next argument is against the proof drawn from the heroic conduct of the martyrs, which he thinks may be easily accounted for from † motives o. enthusiasm,—a passion for glory and reputation; from the veneration paid to the sufferers if they survived the trial, the exalted happiness that awaited them in hea-

[•] Pref. to Inq., pp. 11, 12.

ven if they died under it, and the like. The improbability that such motives could produce the conduct we see in the martyrs, is fully displayed by those who wrote against the Doctor; but the great argument against this objection is, that in the mouth of a heathen or of a Deist, it has equal force against the argument drawn from the sufferings of Christ himself, and the martyrdom of his apostles and others in the apostolic age, in proof of a supernatural dispensation manifested in them. "These considerations," says Mr. Brook, "cannot be supposed to have had any more effect upon them [the martyrs after the apostles] than they had upon St. Peter and St. Paul, and some of the rest of the apostles, who met with the same affectionate treatment from their disciples." And a little after he adds, "It is no more an argument that no extraordinary assistances were granted to the primitive martyrs, because they had an assurance, not only of an immortality of glory, but of extraordinary and distinguished rewards, and of a degree of happiness proportionate to the degree of their sufferings, than it is an argument that the spirit of God did not rest upon Jesus, and in him dwell the fulness of the Godhead bodily, because he endured the cross, despising the shame for the glory that was set before him: Or that no particular communications of God's holy spirit were vouchsafed to St. Stephen, or no uncommon portions of divine grace were bestowed upon St. Paul and the rest of the apostles, because in all their tribulations they had respect unto the recompense of reward, and esteemed those light afflictions which were but for a moment, not worthy to be compared with the glory that was to be revealed,"* Consequently, as the Doctor's objection proves too much against himself and against the Christian religion which he professes, it is justly rejected as proving nothing at all.

XXXVI. A third argument used by the Doctor * ta

^{*} Brook's Exam., pp. 42-44.

ken from the natural incredibility of miraculous facts. which he urges in answering to the objection made against his system, as being destructive of the credibili ty of all history. He argues as follows: "The history of miracles is of a kind totally different from that of common events; the one to be suspected always or course, without the strongest evidence to confirm it; the other to be admitted of course, without as strong reason to suspect it. Ordinary facts, related by a credible person, furnish no cause of doubting from the nature of the thing; but if they be strange and extraordinary, doubts naturally arise; and in proportion as they approach towards the marvellous, those doubts still increase and grow stronger; for mere honesty will not warrant them: We require other qualities in the historian," &c.* In answer to this argument, Mr. Brook writes thus: "If the Free inquiry had been the production of an Infidel writer, it would be nothing strange to find frequent declarations in it, that 'all miracles are to be suspected of course:' That 'in all such extraordinary events doubts naturally arise, and in proportion as they approach towards the marvellous, those doubts still increase and grow stronger;' the consequence of which declarations plainly appears to be, that a higher degree of evidence is required in such cases, than any human testimony is able to afford. But in a writer of Dr Middleton's character, who must be supposed to believe all the miracles of the gospel, and the wonderful propagation of the Christian religion, it is doubtless matter of great surprise to perceive that there have any expressions dropped from his pen, which have the least tendency to such an opinion, or that can bear any such construction, or that may give any umbrage to a sincere believer: Such a reflection upon the history and evidence of miracles, will undermine the foundation of the gospel history,"+ The force of this answer consists in this, that the miracles related in the ages suc-

^{*} Free Inquiry, p. 350.

ceeding immediately after the apostles, are in themselves neither more extraordinary, nor more incredible, than those related in the gospel. The presumptive evidence for them is as strong in the one case as in the other. If, therefore, those of the two succeeding ages are to be rejected on account of their supposed incredibility, those of the apostolic age must, for the same reason, share the same fate; for though the Doctor, as a Christian, may pretend to believe these but upon divine authority, yet a Heathen or a Deist will tell him that the divine authority of the revelation depends upon the reality of the miracles which are the chief proofs of that revelation, and therefore to be believed prior to the revelation; and that consequently the Doctor's argument against the miracles of these after-ages, grounded on their natural incredibility, when used by a Heathen or a Deist, has perfectly the same force

against those of the gospel.

XXXVII. What has been said on the use made of the presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles leads me to observe, 1. That as the Doctor and all his adversaries agree in allowing its just weight to this presumptive evidence during the periods in which they use it; if an equal, or much superior and better founded presumptive evidence than any they have brought forward, can be adduced for the continuation of miracles after all their pretended periods, even down to the present times, or rather as long as the world shall endure, they cannot in reason refuse to admit it. 2. The Doctor's adversaries justly reject his reasons against the presumptive evidence they adduce for the continuation of miracles after the apostles' times, because they can be equally retorted against himself and are plainly subversite of the very foundation of Christianity; but the reasons these gentlemen themselves bring forward against the continuation of miracles after the respective periods they assign, are of the same nature as those adduced by the Doctor, can be equally reforted against themselves, and are equally subversive of Christianity

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as we shall see by and by. It follows, therefore, that all their arguments can have no manner of weight at all against the continuation of miracles beyond the periods assigned by them; and that true miracles may have continued long after these assumed periods. This we shall, in due time, clearly show, and in the mean time proceed to consider what the Doctor and his opponents have said upon the positive testimony for the continuation of miracles.

XXXVIII. With regard to the Doctor, it is not easy to know what his opinion is concerning the nature of the testimony necessary to prove the existence of a miracle. He tells us, as we have just now seen, that "the history of miracles is of a kind totally different from that of common events—that mere honesty in those who attest them will not warrant them; we require other qualities in the historian; a degree of knowl-· edge, experience, and discernment sufficient to judge of the whole nature and circumstances of the case: and if any of these be wanting, we necessarily suspend our belief."* From this one should naturally imagine, that where all these qualities were found, there, at least we should have a just and convincing attestation of the existence of a miracle. But Dr. M. on the contrary, proceeds to argue that it is impossible we should ration ally give credit to miracles, even where all these qualities appeared in the person who attests them; for either the person who possesses these qualities and attests the miracles, is a weak man, or a man of known abilities "A weak man, indeed," says the Doctor, "if honest may attest common events as credibly as the wisest; yet can hardly make any report that is credible, of such as are miraculous; because a suspicion will always occur, that his weakness and imperfect knowledge of the extent of human art, had been imposed upon by the craft of cunning jugglers. On the other hand, should a man of known abilities and judgment relate to us

^{*} Inquiry, p. 351.

things miraculous, or undertake to perform them himself, the very notion of his skill, without an assurance also of his integrity, would excite only the greater suspicion of him, especially if he had any interest to promote, or any favourite opinion to recommend by the authority of such works; because a pretension to miracles has, in all ages and nations, been found the most effectual instrument of impostors, towards deluding the multitude and gaining their ends upon them."* From this passage it evidently appears that, in the Doctor's opinion, it is impossible any human testimony should exist sufficient to convince us of the existence of miracles; the folly of which opinion we have seen above at large. And indeed, as Mr. Brook justly observes, if the Doctor's reasoning in the above passage were true, it would undermine the foundation of the gospel history, because it would have the same strength in the mouth of a Deist or Heathen against all the miracles related in the scripture, as it has against miracles in general, as used by the Doctor. For the Heathen or Deist would, with equal reason, say, -either the sacred writers, who relates these miracles, were weak men, or men of known abilities, and in either case, according to the Doctor's argumentation, no credit could be given to their testimony, --especially as they certainly had most favourite opinions to recommende and we can have no certain proof of their integrity but what is drawn from their own testimony. However, that the Doctor's real sentiments, are, -that no human testimony can found sufficient proof of the existence of miracles, not only appears from the above passage, but also from what he says in his preface concerning the concurrent testimony of church historians in all ages, touching the continuation and existence of miracles; "for there is not," says he, "a single point in all history so constantly, explicitly, and unanimously affirmed by them all, as the continual succession of miracles, in every age down to

^{*} Free Inquiry, ibid.

the reformation, and it is farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their probity, learning and dignity in the Roman church to this very day." Hence the Doctor fairly acknowledges the concurrence of these essential qualifications which he requires in those who attest miracles; -men of the most eminent probity and learning or, which is doubtless the same, of the most eminent honesty, integrity and knowledge; and yet the Doctor rejects their testimony, and would have us believe that all these men of such eminent character in all ages, were nothing but "a set of crafty knaves and silly fools, from whom nothing candid or impartial can be expected" on the subject of miracles. whatever credit they deserve in other things which they relate. Whether this be reasoning like a reasonable person, I leave to the Doctor's admirers to demonstrate. But as the argument quoted above and urged in the form of this dilemma, that "the persons attesting miracles are either weak or of known abilities," may deceive by the show of reason it bears, I refer the reader to what I have said above, (chap. xi.) in examining the question,-" Whether eye-witnesses themselves can have a convincing proof from their senses, that the miracles they see really exist?"—where it will appear that the Doctor's reasoning in the above citation is entirely founded on a false supposition, to wit, that miracles are not plain facts, lying open to the testimony of the senses, of which the most simple clown is as capable of judging as the most learned philosopher; whereas the contrary of this is undoubtedly the case with th generality of miracles, especially such as are principal - ly referred to in proof of doctrines.

XXXIX. The Doctor's Protestant adversaries, then, justly condemn his opinion as subversive, not only of the faith and credit of all history, but of the gospel itself, and therefore as altogether unworthy of a Christian, and utterly inexcusable in one who professes that name; and they lay down such qualifications and circumstances attending testimony, as render it a most certain and

unquestionable proof even of the existence of miracles. Some of their sentiments on this head we have seen above, (chap xi.) when considering the nature of the proof for the existence of miracles; but as Mr. Brook is particularly explicit upon this point, I shall here relate the substance of what he says. First, he justly observes, that, "the validity of an evidence given to a matter of fact, either viva voce, or in writing, is not determined by the particular opinions which the witnesses may espouse in other matters, but by their knowledge of the things which they attest, and by their own integrity.—In courts of civil judicature, where the nature of this evidence is best understood, and most fairly examined, the character of a witness, and the competency of his knowledge as to the particular point under debate, is the only subject of inquiry, not his doctrines or persuasions.—No distinction is made between a member of the church of England and a Sectarist; between a Romanist and a Protestant; between a Deist and a Christian: If their knowledge and veracity is unquestionable, the evidence of them all is admitted without exception. The same method is constantly pursued in all the dealings which men have, with one another. The measures of credibility in historical facts are exactly of the same nature. The whimsical and extravagant doctrines of an historian, his strange and erroneous opinions in matters of speculation, do not at all effect the truth of his history, If his testimony as a witness, that is, if his knowledge and veracity be unexceptionable;—and our want of belief in this case is not occasioned by want of evidence; but either by the force of some strong prejudices on the mind of the person to whom the thing is related, or by the improbability of the fact itself, which no human testimony is able to support. Whatever evidence is fair and reasonable in common historical facts, will likewise be fair and reasonable in facts of an extraordinary and miraculous kind, if the nature and circumstances are such as not to render them liable to any material objection; for in Vol. II.—7*

such a case they are upon the same level with ordinary, events, and therefore can require no higher degree of evidence."*

Secondly, He lays down the circumstances required in testimony, in order to render the evidence for miracles arising from it above all exception. These are, 1. When there is the concurrent testimony of various writers of different principles and persuasions, who lived in the very times when these facts happened, and were themselves eve-witnesses of them. Nothing, indeed, but the force of truth, and the reality of the things themselves, is able to create so unanimous, so universal a consent. 2. This becomes still stronger, when it is confirmed by the testimony even of enemies themselves, and is contradicted by none -3. When such testimony is given, and published to the world in the face of the most virulent enemies, at a time when the truth of the facts attested might easily have been disproved, and a detection of the least fraud or fiction would most effectually have ruined the credit and authority of the witnesses, heightened the malice and calumny of their adversaries, and proved the eternal opprobrium of their party. 4. When those who give the testimony profess it to be a firm tenet of their belief, that every lie is criminal in the sight of God, and that he will not fail to punish those who speak falsehoods even for the advancement of a good cause.

XL. From these principles, Mr. Brook, with great reason, vindicates the miracles of the three first ages; because all the above circumstances concur in the testimony given by the fathers of these ages, for the existence of miracles in their days; whereas the exceptions made by Dr. Middleton against their testimony, are only taken from their particular opinions on speculative points, their mistakes in interpreting some parts of scripture, their errors in the etymologies of language, their being mistaken about the authenticity of some

^{*} Brooks' Exam., chap. iv

books, and such like failings, of which the Doctor imagines he finds them guilty, and from which he concludes they were all knaves or fools; and that their testimony for the existence of miracles, which fell under their own senses, is absolutely unworthy of all credit, even though attended with all the above circumstances. This silly conclusion is justly exploded by Mr. Brook, and the Doctor's other Protestant adversaries; and indeed we are surprised to see such an argument published to the world by a man of Dr. Middleton's talents and penetration. But what could he do ! he was convinced by the force of truth, that the testimony for the continuation of miracles in every succeeding age, down to the present times, was equally strong, and equally attended by every corroborating circumstance, with those of the age immediately succeeding the apostles; and therefore, if human testimony was allowed to be a sufficient proof of miracles in the primitive ages, it could never be refused as an equal proof of those in all succeeding ages, which would be giving up the cause at once in favor of "Popery," he was therefore under the necessity of finding out some kind of arguments for rejecting the testimony of all ages, and was forced to take up with the above, because the weakness of his cause could afford no better. These indeed, he sets off in the most specious manner, by all the force of his eloquence, in order to hide their deformity, and impose upon his unwary readers; but they were by no means the reasons that persuaded himself. He had already embraced his opinion before he had invented these reasons; and the true ground of his sentiments was what he himself expresses in these words,: "If the cause must be determined by the unanimous consent of fathers, we shall find as much reason to believe these miraculons powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive soever after the days of the apostles;"* and therefore, "by granting them (the Romanists) but a single age of miracles after

^{*} Pref p. xiv.

the times of the apostles, we shall be entangled in a series of difficulties whence we can never fairly extricate ourselves, till we allow the same powers slso to

the present age."*

XLI. We must now take a short review of what we have seen of the principles and proceedings of the Doctor and his adversaries. The principles in which they all agree, at least in appearance, and upon which they all proceed, are these: " Christianity must be defended; Popery must be condemned; whatever is necessary for the defence of Christianity must be admitted; whatever tends to establish Popery must be rejected,"—The Doctor thinks Christianity will be sufficiently defended, if the apostolical miracles be admitted as founded on divine testimony but that "Popery" must be established, if miracles be admitted in any one age after the apostles, on the credit of human testimony. Consequently, he rejects all the miracles recorded after the apostolic age, and in pretty plain terms declares (as we have seen above) as his reason for doing so, that miracles are of such a peculiar nature, that no human testimony can render them credible; or in other terms, that their innate incredibility is such as cannot be overcome by human testimony.

Mr. Brook is of opinion, that Christianity cannot stand, if the miracles of the three first ages be rejected, which therefore must of neccessity be defended; that "Popery" would infallibly be established if the miracles of the succeeding ages were admitted, which therefore must be disproved. He of course rejects the Doctor's system with respect to the three first ages, for these reasons, because it would destroy the credibility of history, and undermine the gospel: and he rejects his argument from the incredibility of miracles, because, in the mouth of a Heathen or a Deist, it would with equal force condemn the miracles of the scripture itself.—He therefore holds, that miracles, as such, are as capable of proof from human testimony as any other natural

^{*} Introduction, p. lxxxii.

events, except they be of such an incredible nature, either in themselves, or in their circumstances, as no human testimony can support. He asserts, that the miracles of the three first ages were by no means of this incredible nature; and therefore, that their existence is fully evident, from the testimony of the fathers of these ages, which testimony is attended with every circumstance that can render it incontestable. But as he is of opinion, that "Popery" would be established if miracles were allowed under the third age, he consequently endeavours to show, that the miracles of the after-ages were all of this incredible nature, either in themselves, or in their circumstances, and therefore not to be believed upon any human testimony whatever. Those who carry on the continuation of miracles to the end of the fourth century, act in the same manner: They see no such incredibility in the miracles of the fourth age, as appeared to Mr. Brook, and which could not with equal reason be alleged of those of the former three; hence it is plain to them, that the human testimony by which they are supported is, in every respect, equivalent to that on which Mr. Brook admits those of the three first ages, which, therefore, they affirm, cannot be rejected without falling into the same shocking consequences that he so justly imputes to Dr. Middleton's system. Thus they admit the miracles of the fourth age upon the self-same principles, and for the same reasons on which Mr. Brook admits those of the preceding ages.—But as it does not suit their notions to allow of miracles after the fourth century, they reject those of the fifth and succeeding ages, for the very reasons for which Mr. Brook rejects those of the fourth, and which they so loudly condemn in him. Those who allow the continuation of miracles to the end of the fifth or sixth. centuries, proceed exactly in the same way, both in admitting them to those periods which best suit their fancies, and in rejecting them entirely after that time; all which clearly shows how inconsistent they are among themselves, and how incapable their arguments, for the pretended cessation of miracles at any of their assumed periods, are of giving any solid satisfaction. It, therefore, remains to be shown, that the same arguments which they use to prove a continuation of miracles to the eras assigned by each of these systems, have equal strength to prove that continuation down to this present day; and that the pretended incredibility of the miracles in after-ages is as groundless in itself, and as insufficient to invalidate the force of the testimony for them, as it is against those of any of the first ages, or even against those of the scripture itself.

CHAPTER XIII

REASONS AGAINST THE CONTINUATION OF MIRACLES EXAMINED.

I. The force of human testimony, when the witnesses who bear it have a thorough knowledge of the fact they relate and are people of known integrity, or at least of whose probity there are no reasonable grounds of doubt, is so persuasive, that a person would be accounted a fool who should seriously call it in question; and if this testimony be attended with some or all of those corroborating circumstances which were quoted from Mr. Brook in the preceding chapter, it gives as full and convincing an evidence of the fact so attested, as we have in other sciences from the strictest demonstration of which they are susceptible. This is a truth confessed by the most inveterate adversaries of miracles, in every other concern of life where it has place, and, as we have seen above, is allowed even in proof of miracles by all the Protestant adversaries of Doctor Middleton's system, to be as thorough and convincing an evidence as a reasonable man can demand, or the nature of the

things will admit. But as these gentlemen were well aware that the most perfect testimony can be produced for the continuation of miracles in every age to the present times, in the Roman Catholic Church, and that for the most part it is also attended with all or most of the corroborating circumstances above-mentioned, they therefore found themselves under the indispensable necessity, for the support of their cause, of finding out some restraining argument wherewith to diminish the force of such testimony when it made against them, and shew why the miracles said to have happened after their assumed periods, should not be believed, even though attested by the most perfect human testimony. The argument they have fallen upon for this purpose has indeed a very formidable appearance, and may seem at first sight to be altogether unanswerable. It is no less than the natural incredibility of the facts attested; and what possible force of human testimony can persuade us of a thing which is in itself incredible? "The present question," says Dr. Middleton, "concerning the miraculous powers of the primitive church, depends on the joint credibility of the facts pretended to have been produced by these powers, and of the witnesses who attest them. If either part be infirm, their credit must sink in proportion; and, if the facts especially be incredible, must of course fall to the ground; because no force of testimony can alter the nature of things."* Mr. Brook readily agrees to this assertion,—adopts it as a first principle in the present question, and whilst he admits and defends the invincible force of testimony in commanding our assent even to miracles, he makes this the only exception: "Our belief," says he, "of past matters of fact, whether ordinary or extraordinary, against which there les no reasonable exception from the nature of things, rests entirely upon testimony." And a little after: "Whatever evidence, says he "is fair and reasonable in common historical facts, will

likewise be fair and reasonable in facts of an extraordi nary and miraculous kind, if the nature and circumstances of these facts are such as not to render them liable to any material objection."* It is upon this ground, as we have seen above, that Dr. Middleton rejects all miracles that rest only upon human testimony, and admits of none but such as are contained in the word of God; and it is upon this ground precisely that all the Doctor's adversaries reject all miracles recorded to have happened after the respective eras they are pleased to assign for the duration of miracles in the church. Their whole reasoning upon this question is reduced to these two points—that the miracles recorded before the time assigned by them for their cessation, were by no means incredible or improbable, (and this they endeavour to shew against Dr. Middleton in defence of Christianity;) but that all miracles said to have happened after the period they assign for their cessation, were absolutely incredible, and therefore not to be believed, however supported by human testimony; and this they maintain against the Catholics. Mr. Brook is particularly earnest in displaying this argument, and has gathered together all that can be said in defence of it. It is therefore necessary that we examine him attentively, in order to see what is the real worth and value of this boasted argument, upon which, I may say, the issue of this important question respecting the duration or cessation of miracles in the Christian church, in a great measure depends. For if it be found to be solid, and that the miracles of after-ages are absolutely incredible, the Roman Catholic must give up the cause, and yield the victory to his adversaries; but if this mighty Achilles be found to be weak as a child, and absolutely inconsistent both with common sense and with Christianity, then the perpetual duration of the miraculous powers in the Catholic church will shine forth in all ite lustre, and the testimony on which it is supported must command our ready acquiescence.

^{*} Brook's Examin. chap. iv.

II. The first thing, then, that appears in this argument taken from the incredibility of the facts attested, is, that it proceeds upon a supposition which is contra dicted by common sense, and is itself a manifest absurdity. The precise point in question here is this,-"Whether or not a fact absolutely incredible in itself can possibly be believed, when attested by witnesses who are acknowledged to be competent judges of the truth and people of known probity and integrity; and when their testimony is attended with these corroborating circumstances which carry with them the highest conviction ?" Dr. Middleton readily answers, that the credit of such a fact, however attested, must fall to the ground for this plain reason, that "no force of testimony can alter the nature of things;" in which he evidently shows, that by the incredibility of a fact, he understands its impossibility. And, indeed, common sense shows, that in all this question incredible and impossible are synonymous terms; for if the fact fully attested, as above, be a possible fact, then it would be ridiculous to say it was incredible. You may call it amazing, surprising, astonishing, extraordinary, or what you please, but you can never call it incredible; for no fact, possible in itself, can be incredible, when its existence is actually proved by the fullest evidence the nature of the thing can bear, and is supposed to be the work of omnipotence. If the fact be possible, such evidence for its existence commands our assent, and renders it fully credible. Let us then propose the question again, and substitute impossible in place of incredible, and see how it appears in the eyes of common sense. It will run thus: "Whether or not a fact absolutely impossible in itself can possibly be believed, when attested by witnesses who are acknowleged to be competent judges of the truth, and people of known probity and integrity, and when their testimony is attended with those corroborating circumstances, which carry with them the highest conviction ?" What answer would common sense give to this question, Doubtless it would laugh at such a question, and, with-

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out hesitation, deny the supposition as being itself : mere chimera,—and absolute impossibility; for how could such a case ever possibly exist? How could an absolute falsehood ever procure such testimony? How is it possible that men of known probity and integrity should ever combine to attest as a truth, and, certify of their own knowledge as a fact, that which is absolutely impossible in itself, and therefore absolutely false? How is it possible they should do so in the face of the world, in the midst of their enemies, without having their folly exposed, and themselves rendered contemptible? This would, doubless, be the language of common sense on the above question. And with reason; for the testimony above described is a certain and undoubted effect produced, and actually existing. This effect must have had an adequate cause producing it. It is plain to common sense, that this cause could be no other than the actual existence of the fact so attested; for it is evidently impossible that such a testimony should be given to a falsehood. Consequently, if the fact itself be suppossed to be incredible, and therefore impossible, to suppose it to be supported by such a testimony, is itself a mere chimera,—an absurd and ridiculous supposition. The consequence is, that wherever any fact,however uncommon or miraculous it may appear, is in reality attested by such testimony as we have above described, it is ridiculous and unworthy of a philosopher to pretend to reject such testimony from any supposed incredibility in the fact so attested. A fact in itself impossible, and thefore no fact at all, can never possibly be supported by such a testimony; and a possible fact, when so attested, is by that very testimony rendered perfectly credible and worthy of belief. Hence, then, the only rational conduct in all cases of this kind is, to examine diligently the testimony itself, both as to the knowledge and varacity of the witnesses. If any flaw be found there, then indeed the credit of what they attest falls to the ground, whether the fact be supposed credible or incredible; but if the testimony stands its

ground;—if the witnesses were competent judges of what they narrate;—if they attest it from their own knowledge, and in circumstances in which they must have been detected had what they said been false, and if they be people of known probity and integrity;—if, I say, the testimony upon the strictest examination be found to be of this kind, then, if we hear the voice of reason and our minds be not warped from the truth by passion or prejudice, it will be impossible for us not to

give our assent to the fact so attested.

III. But in order to refute this unphilosophical argument completely, let us suppose the possibility of the case proposed; let us suppose that a fact absolutely impossible in itself, and therefore absolutely false, should ever be attested by human testimony, such as we have above described, what would be the consequences? Why, truly the very same consequences would follow, which make all Dr. Middleton's Protestant adversaries. cry out so much against his system and so loudly condemn it; namely, that all faith in history would be destroyed, the credit of the gospel undermined, and an universal scepticism introduced. For, upon what is our belief of past or absent facts grounded? Surely upon the credit of human testimony, and because the constitution of our nature is such, that when such testimony is of the nature above described, and attended with the corroborating circumstances there mentioned, we are powerfully determined to believe it, from the interior conviction that such testimony, in such circumstances, cannot deceive us. But if we once suppose it possible (as in the case above narrated) that testimony of this kind, even attended with all its corroborating circumstances, may, in any one case, be given to an absolute falsehood, then it may be given to another also, and if so, to all; consequently we can be certain of it in no case, and that determination which we feel in our nature to believe upon proper testimony, is a false principle, upon which we cannot with safety depend. What a multitude of false and fatal consequences would follow in particular cases, if this were so! How false then the supposition which would produce them! And let it not be said here, that human testimony may safely be trusted in ordinary events, and is only to be rejected when the incredibility of the facts attested oblige us to do so. For, if we thus suppose it possible for a fact absolutely incredible, and therefore absolutely false, to be attended with such testimony as above described, surely an ordinary event not incredible in itself, may much more easily procure such testimony for its existence, even though it be a real falsehood. For example, that men should invent and attest statements concerning any ordinary or common event, against which there lies no suspicion from the thing itself. It is much more likely, than that they should attest a fact naturally incredible, which must of course render their testimony suspected, and more expose them to the shame of being detected. Consequently, if we suppose it possible that the fullest testimony should ever be given to a thing in itself impossible, and upon that account false, much more possible will it be for such a testimony to be given to a falsehood in any ordinary event, which in itself contains no impossibility; and such a possibility of falsehood attending the fullest testimony, must, of course, render precarious all such testimony, and hinder us from being thoroughly persuaded of any thing whatsoever founded upon it. And if so, what becomes of all history! what becomes of the gospel? what becomes of Christianity? And, indeed, will not this very argument against miracles, in any age, from their natural incredibility, or, in other words, impossibility, if it has any force at all, militate equally in the mouth of a Deist or Heathen against those of the whole scripture? Nay, is not this the very argument used by these persons against scripture miracles? and are not all the answers given to it by the defenders of the scripture founded upon this very supposition, that it is impossible a full and perfect testimony, attended with all its corroborating circumstances, should ever

be given to an absolute falsehood, much less to any fact in itself impossible? See here, then, how Mr. Brook, and all others who pretend to limit the duration of miracles in the church of Christ, to any of their assumed periods, are obliged to use such arguments for that end as are evidently productive of all those fatal consequences for which they so loudly condemn Dr. Middleton's argument;—which, if true, are subversive of all history, and of the gospel itself, and which in the mouth of a Heathen serve as strongly against all scripture miracles as against any others. They are arguments, nevertheless, which are utterly powerless against any of these things, because, when duly considered, they are found destitute of common sense, and proceed upon a supposition which is manifestly false and chimerical.

IV. Against what has been said on this matter, two objections will perhaps be offered with Dr. Middleton;* First, "There is not," says he, "a single historian of antiquity, whether Greek or Latin, who has not recorded oracles, prodigies, prophecies and miracles-many of these are attested in the gravest manner, and by the gravest writers, and were firmly believed at the time by the populace; yet it is certain, that there is not one of them which we can reasonably take to be genuine, not one, but what was either wholly forged, or improved and aggravated into something supernatural. Secondly, The case of witchcraft, says he, affords the most effectual proof of what I am advancing. There is not in all history any one miraculous fact so authentically attested as the existence of witches. All Christian nations whatsoever have consented in the belief of them, and provided capital laws against them-Now to deny the reality of facts so solemnly attested, and so universally believed, seems to give the lie to the sense and experience of all Christendom—yet the incredibility of the thing prevailed, and was found at last too strong for all this force of human testimony: So that the belief of

^{*} See his Inquiry, p. 351, and the following. Vol. II.—8*

witches is now utterly extinct and quietly-buried." Here, will it perhaps be said, we have two examples from experience, where the fullest human testimony was given to facts utterly incredible, and which of course were afterwards found to be absolutely false. Therefore, as what has actually happened is certainly possible, and may happen again, it is far from being absurd or chimerical to suppose, that facts absolutely incredible may yet be attended by the fullest human testimony; and when that is the case, the incredibility of the fact must invalidate all the force of the testimony, however

strong in itself, and however supported.

V. To give a proper answer to this objection we should examine the two cases proposed, in order to see if they really be to the purpose or not. With regard to the first, taken from the prodigies, oracles, and miracles among the Heathens, to proceed with the necessary clearness, we must distinguish the fact said to have happened from the nature and causes of it; and this distinction we have already, and shall afterwards again have occasion to make with regards to all miracles. The fact itself is, properly speaking, the only object of the senses, and consequently of human testimony; the nature and causes of it,—that is whether it be natural or miraculous whether from natural causes or supernatural—is a subject which properly belongs to the judgment to investigate and determine. Sometimes even this will appear at first sight, at other times it will require attentive examination in which the rules of the criterion serve to guide and direct us. Now as to the facts themselves referred to in the first case above proposed, I ask--Were any of them in reality attested by such human testimony as we are here speaking of ? are they related by authors of known integrity, who were either eyewitnesses of these facts themselves, or had used the opportunity they had of fully ascertaining the truth of them? If they be indeed attended by such an evidence as this, I believe every reasonable man will allow that they were undoubtedly true, and had a real existence in the manner in which they are thus attested. As to their nature and causes, whatever the witnesses of the facts may have said of these, is only their opinion, but not their testimony. But if, on the other hand, these facts have never been attested in the manner above described; if they be only related as hearsays and popular reports, or, though gravely related and even believed by the grave historian himself, yet, if it be manifest that he believes them, not from his own personal knowledge, nor even from a full examination into their truth, but only as carried away by the common report, then the case and example is out of the question, and nothing at all to the purpose; and all the reasoning of the Doctor upon it is only beating the air in vain. But, says he, these facts, though fully believed, are now found to be false. True; but how is their falsehood discovered? Not surely from their incredibility, whilst the testimony, by which they are supported is allowed to be good; but solely by showing the insufficiency and weakness of the testimony.

VI. We come now to the other example taken from the belief of witches; and here it is realy amazing to see how far the Doctor, who professes himself a Christian, and expresses so high a veneration for the Bible, seems to forget himself. According to the way he represents this case, the existence of witches is a thing absolutely incredible, and the belief of them is now-adays utterly extinct; and yet we find their existence attested again and again by the very word of God itself. We find most severe laws made even there against them; we find all recourse to them for help of any kind severely condemned and utterly forbid; nay, we find in the New Testament, that the portion of sorcerers in the next world, shall be a lake of burning fire and brimstone, which is the second death. * Can it then be, as the Doctor so confidently asserts, that the belief of witches, though thus attested by God himself, is absolutely incredible, and that it is at present utterly extinct

^{*} See above, Chap. II. where this is treated at large.

in the world? If so, what becomes of the Christian religion? For if the testimony of God himself proves false with regard to the existence of witches, it may also be false (impious supposition from whence such a conclusion flows!) with regard to the incomprehensible mysteries and miracles of the gospel; nay, this is what Deists and Heathens absolutely affirm. Did Dr. Middleton reflect on what his Bible contains, when he made this objection? I scarce think he did, or for his own honor, at least, though he had no regard to God's he never would have made it.

VII. From what I have here said it is evident, that the boasted objection against the existence of miracles, taken from their supposed incredibility, is a mere sophism, proceeding upon a supposition not only false, but impossible. For if the fact attested be possible, and the testimony unexceptionable, such attestation renders it perfectly credible; and if the fact be impossible, it is no less impossible that it should be attested by an unexceptionable testimony. For it is impossible the existence of a fact should be consistent with the knowledge of the witnesses, if the fact had no existence at all, nay, could possibly have none; neither is it to be supposed that men in their wits would combine to give out and attest, as a thing consistent with their knowledge, what they not only knew to be false, but what they knew to be an impossibility, as this very circumstance must immediately expose them to de-tection, and to the utmost shame and infamy.

VIII. Here, then, we might justly rest this argument; for as the only reason brought against the existence of the miracles of after-ages,—though fully attested,—is their supposed incredibility, if this falls to the ground, as we have seen it does, it follows that no just exception can be made to these miracles; and therefore, that, when sufficiently attested, they are undoubtedly to be admitted. But as great stress is laid upon this argument, and several different branches of incredibility are displayed in support of it, I shall go on to consider

each of them in particular, as I find them in Mr. Brook, and show the weakness and insufficiency of all he says on the subject. First, however, it will be necessary to see if we can find out what these gentlemen themselves mean by incredibility, and what is the precise idea which they affix to this word. I do not find that any of them gives a proper definition of it at all; and from what they say about it in their writings, it would seem as if they were not agreed about its meaning among themselves; nay, there is even reason to think that it is used in different senses by the same person,

according as suits best his present purpose.

IX. To begin with Dr. Middleton: In the citation from the Free Inquiry related above, chapter. xii. δ. 38. from the conditions which he there requires in testimony to prove the existence of any miraculous fact, and sufficient to over-rule the incredibility naturally inherent in every miracle as such, it would appear to be his opinion, that this incredibility is something real, arising from just causes, and natural to every miracle whatsoever But in his remarks on the Observator, p. 40, he changes his opinion entirely, and looks upon this incredibility of miracles not as any thing real and naturally inherent in them, but as a mere ideal appearance, as seated only in our imagination; for the Observator having alleged that these miracles which are not incredible in themselves, ought always to be admitted when sufficiently attested, and those only to be -rejected which are in themselves incredible, the Doctor replies, " To say that, where the facts themselves are incredible, such miracles are to be rejected, is to beg the question and not to prove it; a too precarious way of reasoning! because what is incredible to me may seem credible to another." Here then, according to the Doctor, the credibility or incredibility of a miracle is just as we fancy it to be; and is this a reasonable ground to over-rule the utmost force of human testimonv?

X. Mr. Brook, who treats this subject more at large

in the first chapter of his examination, speaking of the presumptive evidence for the miracles of the first three centuries, expresses himself thus: "What may with great plausibility of reason be urged against the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries, can here have no There is no ridiculousness or incredibility in the miracles themselves, which are said to have been wrought. There is no impertinence, absurdity, or impiety in the ends for which they are supposed to have been performed, to shock the faith of a true Christian, or to raise any suspicion of the miraculousness of these facts: there is no apparent reason against our belief of miracles in those days: there is a strong presumption of their truth and reality: miraculousness of those events which are recorded by the primitive writers of the church, is no objection to the credibility of them. We can discover manifestly the propriety and necessity of divine interpositions from the circumstances of those times; and were such a propriety and necessity appears, there no Christian can have any reasonable objection to the belief of them; for every Christian, from the nature of his profession, must be supposed to think, that the working of miracles is no way inconsistent with the idea of that God whom he serveth." In these words. which are an abridgement of what he displays at large throughout the whole of his sixth chapter, against the continuation of miracles after the third century, we find collected together all that can well be said about the incredibility of any miracle. From this, then, I shall endeavour to put the true meaning of this vaunted word into some orderly point of view, that we may be enabled to form some distinct idea of it, and not bewilder our judgment by a confusion of words; and by this means we shall the better perceive what weight it ought to have in the present argument.

XI. A miracle then is incredible when, for solid reasons, it cannot possibly gain belief from a reasonable person. This incredibility may be conceived to arise from two causes: either from the fact itself said to have

been performed, or from the circumstances in which it is said to have been done. The variety of the fact itself, its amazing greatness, its miraculousness,—however stupendous it be,—can never render it incredible in itself, except it involve a contradiction, and be absolutely impossible; because where Omnipotence is allowed to be the agent, nothing that is possible can be in itself incredible, as is plain to common sense. incredibility, then of the fact in itself implies its impossibility. Again, the incredibility of any possible fact will arise from its circumstances, when they are such as render it unworthy of Almighty God, or contrary to his divine perfections to perform it in such circumstances. This may be called a moral incredibility, as the former may be called a physical one; and these two kinds of incredibility comprehend the full idea affixed by Mr. Brook to this word, in all he says in the above citation. The circumstances there supported by Mr. Brook to render a fact incredible which is in itself possible, are various and of different kinds. Some of the most remarkable we have fully examined already, when treating of the 'Ends and Instruments of Miracles,' and have shown how little weight all that is said upon these heads against miracles can have with any reasonable person. I shall here examine the rest, and the particular application of them made by Mr. Brook, and shall expose their weakness and fatal consequences, if allowed to have any solid weight in this matter.

First, he observes, that there were manifest reasons of necessity and expediency for the good of the church, which made it becoming Almighty God to work many miracles in the three first ages, but that all these reasons ceased from the days of Chrysostom at least: "Now, as the concurrence of Providence," says he, "is never wanting upon important and necessary occasions, so it is never exercised in a superfluous and impertinent manner;" and therefore this change of circumstances in the state of the church, gives all reason to believe that miracles were then withdrawn. In answer to this I

observe, that all these reasons of necessity and expediency, displayed by Mr. Brook at large in his chapter on the presumptive evidence for the miracles of the first three ages, are reduced to this one:- 'The propagation of Christianity at the beginning required the help of miracles: but when Christianity was propagated and established, it required them no longer; therefore they were then withdrawn.' Here it is supposed, 'that Christianity stood in need of miracles only for its propagation among the Heathens;'-and, that this need of Christianity is the only reason for which it would be worthy of God to work miracles:'-That the last of these is a manifest falsehood, we have seen above when speaking on the ends of miracles; the former we shall afterwards see to be equally against truth, when we come to consider the presumptive reasons for the continuation of miracles; and consequently this argument against the credibility of the miracles of after-ages is good for nothing. Besides, this argument in the mouth of a Heathen or Deist, would prove that there were no miracles wrought among the people of God in the old law after their full establishment in the land of promise; for whatever reasons of necessity or expediency might be alleged as presumptive proofs for the miracles wrought by God in establishing that religion, all these entirely ceased when it was in fact fully established; and therefore, according to this argument, all miracles after that period become utterly incredible, "for Providence never concurs in a superfluous and impertinent manner!"

XII. His second reason against the credibility of the miracles of after-ages is taken from their number:—
"The number of the miracles," says he, "pretended to have been wrought in the fourth and fifth centuries, is itself another just exception to the truth and credibility of them." This seems an odd kind of argument; however, he adds his reasons:—"It may reasonably be presumed," says he, "that as the benefit of miraculous powers began to be less and less wanted in proportion to the increase and power of the Christians, so the use

least it cannot, I think, fairly be imagined, that as the real exigencies of the church were continually lessening, miracles should become still more and more numerous; yet in fact we find, if the writers of these ages deserve any credit, that the power of working miracles was more extensive and universal in the time of Chrysostom and afterwards, than in the days of the apostles themselves.—Nor was the benefit of these miracles confined to societies of men only; it extended itself even to the caves and dens of beasts; the wonderworkers of those days retired from the company and converse of their fellow-creatures, fixed their abodes in mountainous and desert places, and made the brute creation sensible of the extraordinary power and presence of the Almighty."*

XIII. If what is here said were divested of its declamatory style, and reduced to a proper form of argument, it would not be easy to show any connection between its premises and the consequences drawn from them. But, letting that pass, I observe on this passage, 1. That it proceeds upon the same false supposition as the former argument did, viz: That the propagation of the Christian religion is the only end worthy of God for which to work miracles. For, though the increase and power of the Christians made it less necessary to work miracles for promoting that increase and power, yet, if there be numbers of other ends worthy of miracles,—as we have seen there certainly are; if there be numbers of other exigencies which require the help of miracles, besides the propagation of religion, as is in fact the case, then all the above flourish of an argument falls to the ground at once, being deprived of its support and foundation .- 2. Whether all the miracles related by the writers of these ages be true or false, is nothing to the purpose, and quite out of the question. Nobody ever pretends to defend all and every one of them; many of

^{*} Brook's Examin. p 302, &c. Vol. II.—9

them may have been perfectly true, although there has not been handed down to us a full and unexceptionable testimony of their being so. All these, however numerous, may be given up at once. We have to do only with those for whose truth and reality a full and unexceptionable testimony can be produced. Now what a ridiculous way of arguing is it to say, 'There are great numbers of miracles related to have been performed in the fourth and fifth and following ages, for the truth of which we have not at present a full and proper evidence; therefore all those in these ages for which we have the most undoubted testimony of the gravest authors, and eye-witnesses of them, are to be rejected as false and counterfeit!' And yet this is the full force of the argument, if it has any at all. 3. It is a downright falsehood to assert, that, according to the writers of these ages, 'miracles became more extensive and more numerous after the days of Chrysostom, than in the days of the apostles.'—In the days of the apostles, and during the first three ages, the charismatic graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost were poured out on all the faithful, and the visible effects of his divine presence and assistance were performed, in speaking with tongues and prophesying, and other miraculous operations almost in every Christian.

This Mr. Brook himself has proved at large in his chapter 'On the persons endowed with miraculous powers;' and to confirm what he says, cites Mr. Dodwell as follows: "Were we to run through all the testimonies above cited from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, &c. we should find that they speak of the whole body of Christians, great as well as small, as endued with these gifts on any signal occasion; but they insist particularly on the performance of them by those who had the least natural-endowments, as the mighty hand of God was most visible when it displayed itself by the meanest instruments," &c. Now, it is certain that this extension and universality of these gifts was with leaven long before the days of Chrysostom, and that they were bestowed

in a less conspicuous manner, only upon those holy persons who, sequestering themselves from the corruptions of the world, studied only to render their souls acceptable to their great Creator, and were thereby disposed for receiving these supernatural powers and graces. The real case is this:—after the conversion of the Roman emperors, the number of learned Christian writers became vastly greater than in the former ages, and their writings have been preserved in greater abundance down to our times. In these writings many more particular miracles have been recorded than in the writings of the three first ages; because both the number of writers, the quantity of their writings, and the variety of their subjects, were much greater; but had all the particular miracles of the three first ages been committed to writing, there certainly would have been no comparison; so that our author here departs from the truth in the representation he has given us of the case, and consequently all his witticisms upon this occasion only serve the more to condemn him. 4. The same way of arguing, in the mouth of a Deist and Heathen, will equally serve to prove that the numerous miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisha, some of which were even performed in the deserts among the beasts, were all fictitious. Put Jews instead of Christians, the exigencies of the synagogue for those of the church—the times of Elijah and Elisha for the days of Chrysostom, and all the above cited argument of Mr. Brook's against the miracles of the fourth and fifth ages, will equally serve the purpose of a Heathen and a Deist against those performed by these two great prophets; nay, will have just the same force, if displayed by the pen of a Middleton, against those of the three first centuries, for which Mr. Brook so strenuously contends; and consequently, in proving too much it proves in fact nothing at all.

XIV. His third argument against the credibility of the miracles related in the fourth and fifth ages, is of a very singular nature, and composed of the grossest

misrepresentation and sophistry. In the fourth century arose the Arian heresy, one of the most dangerous that ever attacked the Christian religion. It consisted in denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, and representing him as a mere creature. The abettors of this pestiferous doctrine were very numerous, and of the highest authority and power both in church and state, and they spared no pains, hesitated at no crime, to promote the interest of their faction, and used every base and ungenerous art to calumniate and persecute the Catholics. The Catholics on the other hand, opposed, to the utmost of their power, this torrent of impiety that was pouring in upon the church; their zealous pastors endeavoured, both by words and writings, and other apostolical labours, to confirm the faithful, to confute impiety, and defend the honor of their Lord and Master; yea, many of them, as well as of their people, suffered persecutions, imprisonment, banishment, and even martyrdom itself, in testimony of the divinity of Jesus. tainly, if ever the exigencies of the church required the protection of miracles for the attestation of the truth, the comfort of her children, and the confirmation of . the faithful, they required it at this time, when all the force of the Roman emperors, the most horrid calumnies and the deepest politics were often employed to undermine the very foundation of her faith, by a more dangerous attack than had, perhaps, ever been made against it by the Heathens. Accordingly, we find many remarkably miracles performed at this time in defence of the Catholic faith, and by several of the orthodox pastors. These are attested by men of the greatest character for their sanctity and integrity, and who were themselves eye-witnesses of them; they were performed not in secret places, and related afterwards to the world, but in public, before multitudes of people, in the face of the world, in presence of the very Arians themselves, who wanted neither the will nor the ability to discover the fraud or imposture, if any such had been. Their effects were to confound the Arians, to

stop their fury, and often to convert them. Certainly a more ample proof both of presumptive evidence and positive testimony cannot be produced for any miracle in any preceding age, than for those performed upon this occasion; and yet, according to Mr. Brook's logic, they were all impostures and forgeries. To prove this point, he represents the zeal and fervour of the orthodox pastors in defence of the divinity of Jesus Christ, as merely the effect of pride and ambition, -as much so, at least, as the conduct of the Arians was. "During this long contest," says he, "which was managed with all the animosity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce; when each party seemed more solicitous about their own power and authority than about the doctrines they espoused; when the whole struggle between them was more for conquest and dignity than for the sake of truth itself; it is highly probable, that in many cases where private arguments and public decrees had not the desired success, there appeals were made to a pretended divine power as openly exerted in confirmation of them." To prove this assertion in regard of the Arians, he relates that Philostorgius, the Arian, has recorded numbers of miracles, as performed by the chiefs of that heresy, all which, he tells us, in the judgment of that learned and accurate critic Photius, who has preserved a compendium of Philostorgius' history, " were mere forgeries, and inserted into his history with design only to countenance and support the party in which he was engaged." And to show that the Catholics were guilty of the like appeals to pretended miracles, he cites three or four miracles related in their favour, which, without finding the least flaw in the testimony recording them, or even pointing out one single circumstance or reason to prove them forgeries, he only says in general, that "their circumstances give us the strongest reason to suspect they were forged by the Homoousians in favour of their particular tenets," that is, by the orthodox Christians in favour of the divinity of Jetus Christ! From the

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above pretended probability, and the supposed reasons of suspicion, he draws this final conclusion: "Now it is not to be supposed, but the same principles of zeal, which induced either the Arians or Athanasians to commit the above-mentioned forgeries, to propagate these and such like fictitious stories, would extend itself to their other relations of the extraordinary kind, that were made to serve the same purposes; and accordingly must render them all justly suspected." *

XV. It is really amazing to see how industrious the mind of man is to blind and deceive itself when engaged in a bad cause, of which this reasoning of Mr. Brook is a glaring example; for charity will not allow me to suppose that he saw the malice and disingenuity of it. He lays the foundation of his argument by basely misrepresenting the conduct of the Catholic and orthodox party, and from this misrepresentation he supposes as highly probable, that appeals would be made by both sides to miracles,—to a "pretended divine power as openly exerted in favour of their respective tenets." The weakest judgment cannot fail to see the folly of such a supposition, and how much it contradicts common sense. For, if the contest was carried on with all the animosity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce,' how is it possible that either party should appeal to pretended miracles as openly exerted in their favour, without exposing themselves to inevitable detection and confusion? Would not the other party have immediately exposed such pretended miracles! Would they not have discovered the fraud, detected the forgery, and made a most powerful handle. of such pretences to confound their adversaries? Nay, is this not the very argument that Mr. Brook himself makes use of to prove the reality of the miracles of the preceding centuries,—that they were performed in the presence of enemies who wanted neither will nor power to detect them, had they not been real? And is

^{*} Brook's Exam. chap. vi.

not this one of these corroborating circumstances which, as we have seen, is required by him to give human testimony its highest lustre and efficacy? But he goes on to prove that this was actually the case, and tells us that Philostorgius, the Arian historian, has recorded many miracles said to have been performed by those of that party, which, by the testimony of the great and learned Photius, were all forged and recorded by him, only to serve a turn; and he then mentions several said to have been done on the other hand, in favour of the Catholic doctrine, which, in his opinion, are no less fictitious than the former. Here again, is another gross misrepresentation. The Catholics did appeal to miracles, -real miracles, not pretended ones; miracles performed in the presence of multitudes, and for the reality of which the fullest evidence of human testimony has been handed down to our days, and which were never contradicted nor called in question not even by the Arians themselves. These Mr. Brook takes no notice of. The Arians seeing the advantages the Catholics drew from these undeniable interpositions of Almighty God in their favour, had recourse to the same arms, and pretended that miracles had been wrought also by some of their party. But what was the consequence? Whilst the splendour of those miracles wrought in favour of the truth, make the Catholic doctrine triumph over all its enemies, those pretensions of the Arians served only to confound themselves, and bring disgrace and contempt upon their party; just as in our own days the same pretensions to miracles in the Jansenists, served more than any thing they had done to open men's eyes, and let the world see the folly and perfidy of that faction. It was with reason then that Photius passed so severe, but just a censure upon the miracles related by Philostorgius. But does he pass the same censure upon those related by St. Ambrose, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, and the other great lights of those times? By no means; he knew these had all the evidence that could be desired to convince man-

kind of their reality, and that the Arians themselves had never dared to call them in question. As to those examples of miracles which Mr. Brook relates, as said to have been performed in favour of the Catholic doctrine, either there is a full and sufficient testimony for them or not; if not, then they are out of the question; it is not for them we contend: if there be, then I defy Mr. Brook, netwithstanding his bold and proofless assertions, to point out one single circumstance in them to render them incredible, but what the same or a similar one shall appear in many of those of the three first ages, yea, in those of the scriptures themselves. From what has been said, it will easly appear how ungenerous and unphilosophical it is in Mr. Brook, from the above misrepresentations, and pretended probability and suspicion, to conclude all at once that all the Catholic miracles were forgeries and fictitious stories,—than which conclusion nothing can be more absurd nor unreasonable. For, even allowing that these instances of Catholic miracles which he cites be not sufficiently attested, to us, that does not prove them to be forgeries, because the proper testimony for them may have been lost; but much less does it follow, that even all the others are forgeries also, for which the most ample testimony, even with all its corroborating circumstances, are preserved to this day; and yet this is the wise conclusion he draws from his premises!

XVI. I cannot leave this ridiculous argument without observing further, that the same way of reasoning, especially if the freedom of misrepresentation be also allowed, will serve admirably well for a Heathen or Deist to deny the miracles of Moses, because he and the Egyptian magicians both pretended to miracles in defence of their respective tenets; or for Dr. Middleton to deny all the miracles of the three first ages, because St. Irenæus attests that the followers of Simon and Carpocrates pretended to work miracles as well as the true Christians, and appealed to them in defence of their pestiferous heresies. And this shows how admirably

well calculated this way of reasoning is to disprove the continuation of miracles in the church after the three

first ages.

XVII. A fourth argument, though mentioned some time after the former by Mr. Brook, must be taken in here, because it contains another answer to it, by plainly contradicting the groundwork on which the foregoing objection is built. Pointing out some of the differences between the miracles of the first ages, and those after Constantine, he says, "Another circumstance is that public appeal which was made, that confident attestation which was given to the truth of them in both these periods, which may indeed be probably accounted for in the one case, but is utterly unaccountable in the other."* He then goes on to explain this by observing, that "after the conversion of the Roman empire, the Christians must have been sensible their forged relations could not easily be discovered; they were encompassed with persons well affected to their party, whose manner of education had infused into their hearts strong prepossessions in favour of such stories; that even a detection of false facts or false testimonies could be attended by no bad consequences; that the Emperors themselves would connive at such proceedings; that the civil power would interfere and prevent insults." &c. What a shocking picture does he here give us of the morality of these times! If this be true, what idea must we have of all those great and holy men who flourished in them? Could Mr. Brook say more to confirm the character given of them by Dr. Middleton, that they were all extremely credulous and superstitious—scrupling no arts nor means by which they might propagate their principles; and of a character from which nothing could be expected that was candid or impartial?" Now, if this be the case, how will Mr. Brook defend the genuineness of the Bible which came to us through such hands? Or how will he support the faith of any history, or defend

himself from those very arguments which Le uses against Dr. Middleton for this scandalous character which he gives of the ancient fathers? But letting all this pass, how will he reconcile what he here says with what he laid down as the groundwork of his preceding argument? There he assured us that the fourth age after the conversion of the Roman empire was an age "in which a spirit of pride and ambition, a spirit of faction and contention had spread itself through the world, and entirely possessed the hearts of by far the greatest part of the Christians—that the contest between the Arians and Catholics was carried on with all the animosity and fury that the most bigotted and inflamed zeal could produce;" which made each party appeal to pretended miracles as openly performed in their favour. One would naturally conclude from this, that the party appealing to false miracles could not fail to be detected by the vigilance and attention of the other party; that it is most false to say they were encompassed with persons well affected to their party; that the detection of such false facts and false testimonies could not fail to have the worst consequences to those who alleged them, as their adversaries would certainly on that account expose their party to shame and infamy; that the emperors themselves, however they might connive at their own party, would yet most certainly use all their authority to discover and punish, both in person and fortune, those who should act so in the opposite side to them;—and it is well known with what rancour and fury the Arian emperors on all occasions used their power in persecuting the Catholics, and taking every advantage over them. With what face then can Mr. Brook so palpably contradict himself as he does in giving us such opposite accounts of these times?

XVIII. His fifth argument, taken from the veneration paid to the relics of saints, he expresses thus: "The catalogue of miracles was not a little increased, it is probable, in the fourth and fifth centuries, by the superstitious regard to martyrs and their relics." He then

goes on, to the great honor of the Roman Catholics, to show from the expressions of several of the most venerable fathers of those times, how consonant the doctrine of these early ages on this point is to what is taught in the Catholic church to this day; and then concludes thus: "Now, in an age when such a kind of fanaticism universally prevailed, there is the greatest reason to believe, that plain facts would be often exaggerated into extraordinary relations, and that any fictitious story, especially of the miraculous kind, which might do honour to saints or relics, would be eagerly embraced and diligently propagated." In answer to this, I observe, 1. That all he says here is a mere begging of the question, viz.—that the veneration paid to the relics of saints is superstition and fanaticism. This is absolutely denied by the whole body of Roman Catholics, and therefore it is childish to suppose that for granted, which is the very thing in dispute, and then to argue from such a supposition as from a certainty. 2. If he had consulted Dr. Campbell, he would have proved to him, beyond reply, that no degree of fanaticism less than frenzy could ever possibly make men disbelieve their senses, or fancy they saw what had no existence; and yet there are many miracles recorded in these ages as having been performed by relics which are attested by men of the greatest integrity, who declare they were eye-witnesses of them, as were multitudes of others before whom they were performed. 3. Omitting all he alleges, it amounts only by his own account to a probability, which, whatever weight it may have in such relations as are not sufficiently attested, yet surely it cannot have the smallest weight against such as are attested by the fullest evidence of human testimony, and attended with all its corroborating circumstances; and it is for these only we are concerned.

XIX. His sixth and seventh arguments against the credibility of the miracles related in the fourth and fifth centuries, are taken from the supposed impropriety of the ends, and the unworthiness of the instruments by

which they are said to have been performed. But both these objections have been discussed at large when treating on the ends and instruments of miracles, to which I refer the reader, that I may not repeat what has

been already said.

XX. His eighth argument is taken from the great esteem in which the monastic life, which he describes, was hold during those two ages, and then makes this application: "What has been written concerning monks, a few particulars only excepted, is only spoiled with fictitious stories; whilst the author, indulging his own zeal, relates not what the Saint has really done, but what he wished he had done. This is the true cause and real spring of so many impertinent and ridiculous stories. so many absurd and incredible tales, with which the lives of Paulus, of Antony, of Hilarion, of Martin, of Macarius, and of various other monks, hermits, and anchorites, abound." * Here is a bold assertion, but, like numberless others in Mr. Brook's work, not the least shadow of a proof is so much as pretended to. But unluckily for him, the lives of these very saints whom he mentions, were written and published to the world in such a time, and in such circumstances, as must inevitably have brought on a detection, if any falsehood had been inserted in them; and the miracles related in them were so public and notorious in themselves, and so perfectly well known at the time, that nothing can be better attested than they are. Now, though it should be allowed that the zeal of a writer might lead him to exaggerate any fact or circumstance, or even invent any such in favour of the Saint whose life he writes, the only case in which this can reasonably be presumed to have happened, is when the writer is justly suspected, and has not the qualifications necessary to render his testimony valid, and when the relation depends solely upon him. But when the writer is above suspicion both for his knowledge and integrity, and when several concur in

giving the same testimony, and when the circumstances are such as must have brought on a detection had it been false, in this case it would be highly absurd to suppose the whole was a fiction. Besides, this argument, as well as the former, would prove by far too much if allowed to take place; for surely the regard paid to - monks in the fourth and fifth ages could not exceed, nor perhaps equal, that paid by the people of God in the old law to Moses, to Elijah, to Elisha, and those other saints of God who were so remarkable in their days, much less could it equal that of the apostles to their Lord and Master, or that of St. Luke to his great master St. Paul. If then the affection and zeal which a writer has towards the one whose life he describes, is alone sufficient to invalidate his testimony when it is in favour of his hero, may not Heathens and Deists make use of a similar argument against the scripture miracles themselves?

XXI. But as the origin and nature of the monastic life is perhaps but little attended to, and scarce known to many in this country, it will not be amiss here to give a brief account of it, by which we will see the injustice of those many sneers and severe censures which are thrown out against it by Mr. Brook and the generality of Protestants. The reader will the better perceive the weakness of all the arguments they draw from it

against the continuation of miracles.

During the three first ages of Christianity, whilst all the rage of hell, and the greatest powers on earth, were combined together against it, and used their joint endeavours, by the most bloody persecutions, to extirpate it from the face of the earth, the generality of those who embraced that sacred institution were saints. They made it the chief business of their lives to observe the sacred maxims of their religion, and to live in the most perfect obedience, not only to its holy laws, but even to its evangelical counsels. As there was no earthly encouragement to make them embrace that religion, but every wordly motive to the contrary, the only view those had

who professed it, was the desire of their eternal welfare. of which they had conceived so just a value and esteem, that they willingly renounced all the goods of this life and sacrificed every other consideration in order to secure it. Hence, their affections being taken off from the things of this world, their whole study was to follow the maxims and examples of Jesus Christ, and to become saints. But when the Roman emperors were converted. and the Christian religion became the religion of the court, the face of things was sadly altered. It was now no longer necessary to renounce all the things of this world in order to profess to be a Christian. The example of the emperors engaged even those to become Christians who loved the world more than the truth. slight persuasion that it was reasonable induced many to make profession of it, who had no idea of renouncing the pomps and vanities of the world, though this be essentially necessary in order to live up to the laws and maxims of Jesus Christ. Finally, those who had neither honor nor religion, had little difficulty in feigning themselves to be Christians, when they saw it had generally become the most useful means to promote their wordly interest. By these means the holy society of the faithful, whose only aim was to renounce the world and follow Jesus Christ, found itself in a manner overwhelmed by great multitudes of people, who entered into it from human considerations, without possessing the least degree of the spirit of the gospel. These strangers and disguised enemies exceeded in number the true citizens of the holy city, and often became the most powerful in those things which depend upon number and external authority. The riches and honors which were then consecrated to Jesus Christ by the piety of those who possessed them, and which were committed to the management of the pastors of the church, to be used according to the orders of the prince of pastors, corrupted the hearts of many who were not yet become strong, and the continuance of this temptation exceedingly augment. ed the number of those who fell in it. Their example

corrupted others, and by these means many followed the Christian religion, as mankind before had followed Paganism, and as those still do who follow all false religions, -without reflexion, for interest or by custom. Hence that deluge of iniquity which then appeared among Christians, and which has raged among them since that period. In the midst of all these disorders, the love of Jesus Christ, a zeal for his holy law, a perfect contempt of the world, and the most ardent desire of eternal good, became more eminently conspicuous in his most faithful followers, who detached themselves from the world, and became united to God with more fervour and perfection than even in the times of persecution. Not being able to separate sinners from the society of the faithful, they separated themselves from the company of sinners, and even of those imperfect Christians who chose to remain among the sinful multitudes. They renounced all the advantages and pleasures of the world with so much the more perfection, as they were become more favourable to the profession of the Christian religion, but for that very reason, in their opinion, more dangerous for piety and virtue. Hence vast numbers of both sexes not only left all their possessions, as their predecessors had done under the heathen emperors, but ·also their country, their family, their friends, the very sight of men, and all the pleasures and innocent consolations they could receive from their company, and retired to the most lonely deserts, passing there the rest of their lives in the highest perfection, sequestered from all mankind, and wholly devoted to their great Creator. And this they did, not constrained by necessity to avoid the fury of persecution, but purely of their own free choice, to fly from the contagions of a wicked world, and to avoid whatever might be an impediment to their advancement in Christian perfection. Now, those who made the happy choice were, from their solitary life. called monks* and anchorites, † or from the deserts,

* Monachus, one who lives alone.

¹ Anachorita, one who lives separated from the rest of the world.

the ordinary place of their retirement, were called hermits. ‡ Such was the origin, and such the nature and

design of that mode of life.

It must, however, be observed, that their separation from the world did not, in the least, diminish that perfect union of charity and benevolence, which the Christian religion requires among all its members. Their obedience to the laws of the church was more perfect; their respect and submission for her pastors more sincere,-their zeal for the purity of religion more ardent,—and their love and charity for all Christians, yea, for all mankind,—was stronger and more disinterested. They received and entertained strangers with more love and friendship than other men show to their nearest relations, and they were never more pleased than when they had an opportunity of doing good in return for the greatest injuries. The more they avoided all communication with the world in all its false goods, the more feelingly were they sensible of the evils which the church in general, or any of the faithful in particular, laboured under; and this was an indispensable reason with them for interrupting their solitude in order to converse with men, and even to leave their retirement entirely, in order to assist them. They received those who suffered for the truth into their protection, without fear of displeasing their persecutors; they opposed all errors and novelties, without regard to the power or credit of those who advanced them; and with the holy liberty of an Elijah, and a John the Baptist, whose example they followed in their sacred solitude, they reprehended even princes and their officers, when the cause of God and of justice required it. Many of them were instruments in the hand of God for converting infidels, and reclaiming the greatest sinners; and the church has received from their body numberless zealous pastors who have maintained by word and example the doctrine of Jesus Christ in its purity, and preserved the sanctity of the Christian morality.

^{*} Eremita, an inhabitant of the desert.

XXII. From this account of the monastic state, and the conduct of those who embraced it in its earliest period, it may with justice be inferred,-1st. That the high veneration and esteem paid to it by the rest of the Christian world, was a natural consequence of its sanctity and perfection. The prophet Elijah, when he appeared among the people, was reverenced as an angel from heaven; the sanctity and penitential life of St. John the Baptist procured him such great veneration from all ranks of men, that even the Pharisees themselves began to think that he might be the Messias whom they expected about that time. No wonder then, that those holy solitaries who imitated these great saints in their detachment from the world, in the purity of their manners, and in the penitential austerity of their lives, should, like them, be esteemed as the chosen servants of the Most High God, and as such reverenced and venerated. What Mr Brook, with Dr. Middleton, observes upon this, is extremely just: "That monkery, (this is the name they give it in derision,) in those days was an order of men so highly esteemed in the church, and so much reverenced by the people, as to be reputed the perfection of a Christian life, and the very pattern of an heavenly one. The monastic state was thought an angelic institution, a blessed and evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord; a way of life worthy of heaven, not at all inferior to that of angels; and the persons who engaged in this state were looked upon as the very flower and most valuable ornament of the church, and were styled in a peculiar manner the servants of God. Accordingly, the principal fathers of the church, both Greek and Latin, employed their whole authority and eloquence to extol the perfection, and recommend the practice of the monkish order."*

All this is certainly true, and proved by Dr. Middleton, in his Introductory Discourse from which Mr. Brook takes it, by the express testimonies of the writers of

those times. The obvious consequence that common sense would draw from this account is, that the monastic state must certainly have been a state of the highest perfection; for mankind must have been convinced by what they saw with their eyes, of the sanctity of those who professed it, as otherwise it could not have been held in such high and universal esteem. Let us only judge from ourselves—let any set of men amongst us make ever so great a profession of virtue and sanctity let the most eloquent tongues and pens of the age be employed in extolling their institute, and recommending it to the practice of others, -would this make any impression on the minds of men? Would it procure any regard or esteem for those monks, if their lives gave the lie to their profession, by acting contrary to what was said of them? No, no; this would only bring upon them the greater contempt, and expose their panegyrists to the utmost shame and confusion. The praise, then, given by the holy fathers to the monastic order, the universal esteem and veneration paid to those who possessed it, is the most convincing proof of their eminent sanctity, and of the high perfection in which they lived. Hence we may observe, 2dly. That it is most unjust and unreasonable in Dr. Middleton, Mr. Brook, and other protestant writers, to attempt to expose the religious orders to contempt and ridicule, by attributing to superstition and fanaticism the universal regard in which they were held. Common sense sees it at first view, that such universal veneration, which continued for ages, and continues through the whole Catholic Church, to be paid to the monastic institutions to this day, could never possibly have had existence, if those sacred institutes had not most justly deserved it. No less unreasonable is it to pretend, from this veneration, that the miracles related in those times to have been performed by those holy personages, were, on that very account, incredible. Common sense is shocked at such pretensions, and with the justest reason observes, 3dly. That if Almighty God was pleased to perform any

miracles at all in those days, these were the very people by whom we might expect he would perform them: men detached from all worldly concerns, sequestered from the sinful world, living in the greatest innocency and purity of manners, sacrificing all for the love of God, and by studying continually to please him! If we may judge of the divine conduct by what he has actually done in former times, these were surely the proper instruments in his hand for working miracles; and in this respect we have the strongest presumption in their favour. A positive testimony, then, that this was actually done; a testimony given by all the writers of those times, men eminent for their integrity and learning; a testimony given in public as of facts perfectly well known to their hearers, and which, if false, could not fail to have been detected, to the disgrace of those who attested them; a testimony, I say, of this kind, joined to so just a presumption, if it does not amount to the fullest conviction, the faith of all human testimony whatever, must be discarded from the world. That such was in fact the case, we shall see in its proper place, and here shall only conclude from what has been said, that nothing can be more unreasonable nor more unphilosophical, than what Dr. Middleton and his protestant antagonists have said upon this subject.

XXIII. We now come to another argument used by Mr. Brook, against the credibility of the miracles of the fourth and fifth ages, and which is the ninth in the order I have related them. In this he seems to exult with particular confidence, and spends many pages in illustrating it. He proposes it as follows: "From the surprising likeness of the Popish and Pagan religion, &c. it has been rightly concluded" (by Dr. Middleton, in his letter from Rome,) "and there is the greatest reason to believe, that the religious worship of the Catholics, in its principal and distinguishing parts, was originally derived from the gentile ritual. In like manner, from the great similitude of the Pagan miracles and those recorded in the fourth and fifth centuries, from

the near resemblance of their several relations, from the likeness of the nature, the circumstances, and the occasions of them both, it may reasonably be presumed, that the histories of the miracles of monks, of saints, of martyrs of those ages, were taken, for the most part, from the extraordinary accounts which are given of ancient sages in the gentile world." He then goes on to give several examples of both; and, in order to show the great resemblance between them, concludes with such an air of triumph, and with such a contemptuous disregard for all the miracles related in these times, that one would think he had really said something unanswerable against them. How far this is true the following observations will show.

XXIV. First, then, allowing that there is a likeness in many miracles related of saints to some of those extraordinary things related among the Gentiles, which are certainly false, what conclusion could in right reason be drawn from it? Will it follow that those miracles related of the saints of God are as false as the others? Ridiculous conclusion! Where is the connexion between the premises and the consequence? Is not the same likeness to be found between heathen miracles and many of those in the scripture? Does it therefore follow that these last are false likewise? But allowing for once that this likeness would justify some suspi cion, on what miracles should that suspicion fall? Could it in the smallest degree affect such as are supported by the most credible human testimony that past matters of fact can have? Certainly not. Now, it is for such as these only that we contend. But the proper answer to this argument is to state the case plainly.

From the time that Satan, that haughty spirit, failed in his attempt of putting himself upon an equality with his Maker, he has continually endeavoured to gratify his ambition by imitating the works of God among men. Hence, when the Almighty instituted priests, and oblations, and sacrifices, and temples among his chosen people, for his service, Satan took care to have the

same honours paid to him by his votaries. When Almighty God inspired his holy prophets to know things at a distance, or foretell things to come, Satan, too, endeavoured to imitate this high prerogative of the divinity in the delusive answers he gave by his oracles, or by those who, like the young woman in the Acts, had familiar spirits. In like manner, when, to promote his honour and glory, the true God gave proof of his divinity . by working miracles among mankind, Satan was not wanting to procure homage to himself by the same means, either actually performing extraordinary things by enchantments, as in the magicians of Egypt, and Simon Magus, or in deluding his blinded votaries by appearances, as were many of the prodigies related among the Gentiles, or by circulating false relations of such things, and getting them to pass for truth among the vulgar. Now, how ridiculous an argument would it be, to say, that because there were priests, and oblations, and temples among the heathers, to which those of the church of England bear a great similitude, therefore we may reasonably presume, that these last were taken from the former? Or, to allege, that because there were among the Heathen oracles, and people that had familiar spirits, which foretold things to come, or discovered things secret, in like manner as the prophets are related to have done in the first three ages of the church, therefore it may reasonably be presumed these last were no less diabolical than the former, and were only alleged in imitation of them? No less ridiculous surely is it to argue, that because there is a similitude between some of the miracles related of the saints of God, and some of those false prodigies related among the Gentiles, therefore these last are of a piece with the former, and no more to be regarded than they. It is not denied that the miracles of Moses and the prophets are much more ancient than any of those related. among the Heathens; the natural presumption then is, that those of the Gentiles were taken from those related in the sacred scripture, as it is very certain that many

of the articles of the Heathen mythology are nothing but corrupted imitations of the truths contained in these divine oracles. Consequently, if Almighty God, following the same dispensations of providence in the church of his Son, as he did in the old law, shall be pleased to work miracles by his holy saints, of the same nature and in similar circumstances with those performed of old by Moses and the prophets, can there be any thing more ridiculous and unbecoming a man of sense, or more unworthy a Christian, than to pretend, that because some of the miracles performed by the saints of God resemble those faint and imperfect imitations of the miracles of Moses and the prophets related among the Heathens, therefore those related of the saints are to be rejected as fictitious, and looked upon only as copied from these Heathen originals? Is it not the most natural and obvious conclusion to say, that as they are of the same character as those of the Old Testament, performed entirely for similar ends and in similar circumstances, therefore they undoubtedly arise from the same divine original? and that whatever is said against the miracles of the saints, upon account of their resemblance to those of the Heathens, will equally affect those of the scripture where the same resemblance is found? This reasoning will appear in the strongest light, if we consider some of those very examples which Mr. Brook makes use of to prove the likeness he contends for.

XXV. "Pythagoras," says he, "and Apollonius, if we may believe the writers of their lives, had an admirable gift of conversing with the brute creation;" and then he adds some instances related of the authority they had over the irrational creatures, and the obedience these paid to their commands; but St. Jerom relates examples of such a power in St. Hilarion and St. Antony, as also Ruffinus does of Macarius; and thence he concludes that the latter are no less fictitious than the former. But had he remembered his Bible, he would find that Moses had a much greater power over both

the irrational and inanimtate creation than any thing that is related of the two Heathen philosophers; witness his conduct in the plagues of Egypt, where locusts, frogs, and other vermin came up in innumerable multitudes to plague and punish the Egyptians at his desire, and at his desire disappeared. It is true, in the scripture relation of these things, Moses is represented only as the instrument in the hand of God in working these wonders; but is it pretended that St. Hilarion, St. Antony, and St Macarius were anything else in the wonderful power they showed over the brute creation ! Was it not in the name of God, and for his glory, that they performed these wonders! Why then refer their miracles to the fictitious stories of the heathens, and not rather to those of the holy scripture, to which they bear a much greater likeness both in themselves, and in the manner and ends for which they were performed.

XXVI. Again, says Mr. Brook, "it is related of Apollonius that he could render himself invisible; the same thing is related of some saints, who being in imminent - danger of falling into the hands of enemies, and having recourse to prayer, were rendered invisible to their enemies, and by that means escaped falling into their hands." But is it not also related in holy writ, that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were struck with blindness with regard to the door of Lot's house, so that they groped about, and could not possibly find it? that the Syrian army that was sent to take the prophet Elisha prisoner, was treated in the same manner with regard to him, by which means he escaped being taken by them? And did not Christ himself become invisible when they wanted to make him king, and he passed through them unobserved ?-and did he not instantaneously render himself invisible to the two disciples at Emaus after he had discovered himself to them?

XXVII. "There was a certain family," he continues, "among the ancient inhabitants of Italy, called the Hirpi, who once a year, when they sacrificed to Apollo upon mount Soracte, used to walk through the fire un-

hurt. But the Christian monks far surpassed these Heathen priests in subduing the destructive power of fire." Of this he relates some examples, and from the similitude he discovers between them, concludes, that these last were no less fictitious than those of the Hirpi. But is it not also related in the word of God, that the three holy children walked in the midst of the fiery furnace unhurt, yea, without so much as the smell of fire upon their clothes? And does not Mr. Brook strenuously defend the miracle that is related in the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, when being laid on a pile of wood, and fire set to it, the flames refused to touch the Saint, but formed themselves into an arch round about him. without daring to come near him? How childish then is it in him to reject instances of this kind in the fourth century, merely because of their resemblance to what is related among the Heathens, and yet earnestly defend a much more uncommon effect of the same kind in the second? How unjust are men in their balances, especially when engaged in a bad cause!

XXVIII. "If Pythagoras and Empedocles," says he, "had the power of suppressing winds and stopping hail," of calming storms, of making rivers and the sea itself afford them and their companions an easy and safe passage; Martin and Gregory have not suffered this power to go unrivalled." True; but does not the word of God afford us several examples of the same kind? The Red Sea was obedient to Moses, the river Jordan to Joshua. and afforded them and all their armies an easy and safe passage; Moses and Samuel commanded the storms and hail, and they obeyed them; our blessed Saviour and St. Peter walked upon the waters; and Christ rebuked the stormy winds and the raging sea, and there ensued a great calm. Is it then incredible that Almighty God should do by a Martin or a Gregory, his holy and faithful servants, what he had so often done by others from

XXIX. "Let us now stand still a while" (to use the words of Mr. Brook himself upon this occasion), "and

the earliest times?

take a short review of this mighty argument, in which he so loudly exults, and see what important purposes t may serve." Can any thing be more unchristian and uncharitable than to put miracles done by holy men, and in the name of the living God, in the same class, and upon the same footing with the fictitious stories of the Heathens, to which they have but a very distant and unconsequential resemblance in the facts related; and not rather class them with those of the holy scriptures, to which they bear the greatest resemblance, both in the facts themselves, and in all their circumstances! Is it not a most ridiculous argument to pretend that, on account of this faint likeness to Heathen miracles, they are to be rejected as fictitious, though ever so fully attested by the strongest evidence? Is it not beyond measure unworthy of a Christian to reject and laugh at the above and such like miracles of the saints as trifling, ridiculous, absurd, and what not, while yet we find that there is scarce one of those to which he gives these epithets, but several of the very same kind, and almost the very same things done, are to be found throughout the whole scripture ! Let common sense then judge and decide the weight and importance of this mighty argument.

XXX. After Mr. Brook has, in the manner we have seen, collected together, and set off in the best form he could, all those various arguments which are made use of against the credibility of miracles in the later ages, he concludes by attacking the testimony of these holy fathers themselves who relate them. And here he is guilty of such unfair dealing and such gross misrepresentation, that I dare say even his admirers, if they consider it, will be ashamed of it. It is not my intention to animadvert on all he says on this head. I shall only observe two things; first, The chief argument on which he grounds his exceptions against the testimony of those holy fathers, Saints Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerom, Ambrose, and the rest, is, that they contradict themselves, and contradict one another in the testimony they

give of miracles in their days, sometimes affirming that miracles are entirely ceased, and even enquiring intothe cause of this cessation; at other times relating miracles as performed in different places even in their times, and before their own eyes. On this Mr. Brook expatiates with all the strength of his eloquence, and, by those little arts which are well known in the schools of logic, endeavours to display this argument as unanswerable. But how unworthy and ungenerous is it in him to do so ! We have seen above, from the plainest testimony of St. Augustine in his Retractions, the distinction between the extension and universality of the charismatic graces, with the visible signs of the communication of the Holy Ghost, and the performance of particular and occasional miracles, independent of these graces. former is acknowledged to have ceased before the days of St. Augustine; the latter, we contend, has continued in every age of the church till this day. Now St. Agustine expressly declares, that wherever he speaks of the cessation of miracles, he means only the former kind, but by no means the latter, - many remarkable instances of which he assures us were within his own personal knowledge. Mr. Brook had read this passage of St. Agustine,—which is a key to all that the other holy fathers have said upon this subject, and entirely dissipates Mr. Brook's objection; -this, I say, he had read in St. Augustine, because he refers to it; with what face then could be conceal the truth, and so grossly misrepresent the sense and meaning of these holy men?

XXXI. I observe, secondly, that Mr. Brook, in order to render suspicious the testimony of the fathers of the fourth and fifth ages, on this head, uses many pitiful reflections, similar to those used by Dr. Middleton against all the fathers in general, and which, if allowed, would tarnish their characters as so many fools and knaves, as effectually as what the Doctor alleges against the characters of those of the ages before them. Now Mr. Brook justly condemned all the Doctor had said against those of the three first ages: with what face them

the fourth and fifth,—especially when we consider that the self-same arguments by which he condemns the Doctor, equally condemn himself? For if the fathers of the fourth and following ages were all a set of fools and knaves, from whom nothing candid, nothing impartial can be expected,—which must be the case if what he says of them be true,—what becomes of the faith of history? What becomes of the Bible, which comes to us only through their hands? What becomes of Christianity? Let Mr. Brook or his admirers answer these questions, if they can, and Dr. Middleton's party will learn what answer to give when urged by Mr. Brook

against themselves.

XXXII. I have now examined all the arguments of any note used against the credibility of the miracles related after the first three ages, and I have shown that they all proceed either upon false suppositions or misrepresentations; that the conclusions drawn from them, when the case is properly stated, have not the least connection with the premises; that they may all be used by Deists and Heathens against the miracles related in the scriptures with as great show of reason as they are used against those of the fourth and following ages; in a word, that they are nothing but mere sophistry, clothed in pompous language, and bold assertions, by which they may indeed impose upon superficial readers, but can never bear the test of strict and attentive examination. It cannot be doubted but that Mr. Brook has said all that can be said upon the subject; neither his abilities, nor his will to do so, can admit of the smallest doubt. Since then all he has said is so little to the purpose, we may justly conclude, that not the smallest reason can be brought against the credibility of the miracles of the fourth and following ages, either from the facts themselves, or from their circumstances; and consequently, that such miracles in these ages as are properly attested by sufficient testimony, cannot in justice be rejected. This is further confirmed by what we have seen in the

preceding chapter on the manner this question is handled by Dr. Middleton and his protestant adversaries. Their setting out by begging the question;—their being all the same, and proceeding upon the same principles at the bottom;—their arbitrary extending or limiting the needs of the church as best agrees with their systems;—their allowing the self-same reason to have the greatest strength in one age, and none at all in another, according as it makes for or against their views;—their different contradictory systems, being all mere arbitrary hypothes:—all these observations, and others such as we have occasionally made in the preceding chapter, evidently show their utter want of all solid arguments against the continuation of miracles in any one age of the church since her commencement to this present time.

CHAPTER XIV.

PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE FOR THE CONTINUATION OF MIRA-CLES THROUGHOUT ALL AGES.

I. Whoever seriously considers what has been advanced in the two preceding chapters, will, I dare say, readily agree that there cannot be produced one solid argument against the credibility of miracles in whatever age they are said to be performed, provided their existence be sufficiently attested by unexceptionable witnesses. We have carefully examined, one by one, all the pretended arguments usually brought to disprove the credibility of miracles, and we have shown them to be altogether lame in every respect,—perfectly frivolous, and utterly incapable of even so much as weakening the credibility of a well attested miracle. We are thus brought back to what I showed at large in another place,—that as Testimony is the only way by which the

existence of miracles can be proved to those who were not eye-witnesses of them, so it is a full, perfect, and sufficient means for this purpose; that all the metaphysical arguments which are brought against the existence of any miracle a priori, and extrinsical to the testimony on which it is founded, are but mere sophisms, and can never, in the eye of common sense, have the least weight to influence the mind, or weaken that conviction which the force of testimony gives her; and therefore, that the only rational objection that can be made against the existence of any miracle, must be such as strikes directly at the testimony itself by which it is supported. Upon this ground we might supersede the consideration of all presumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation of miracles in the Christian church, and proceed to prove it by positive testimony; but as we have such evidence in abundance, and that too, of a more solid and satisfactory nature than what the Protestant writers against Dr. Middleton have made use of to prove the continuation of miracles down to the various periods assumed by them: and as the displaying of this presumptive evidence will add a peculiar lustre to the force and strength of the positive proofs which we shall afterwards consider, I propose at present to take a view of this presumptive evidence, and show the solid grounds on which it is founded.

II. Though Mr. Brook proposes the presumptive evidence for the miracles of the three first ages under several different heads, yet, upon examination they are all reducible to this one postulatum and its consequence. "The exigencies of the church, for the support and propagation of religion, made it highly becoming Almighty God to work miracles in these ages; therefore it was to be expected, and we may reasonably presume he did so." This is the postulatum upon which all the different systems of the duration of miracles proceed. This is the ground-work and foundation on which they are built; and the jarring superstructures raised upon it differ among themselves only from the different manner

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in which this postulatum is applied; but they are all the same at the bottom, and equally solid. For it is plain from what we have seen, that these various applications are merely hypothetical, and only used by their abettors as best suits their preconceived systems, without the least shadow of reason for one more than for another. Dr. Middleton, though he adopts this very postulatum as his own reason for the continuation of miracles during the apostolic age, yet laughs at it heartily in his adversaries for extending it beyond that age; yea, he pronounces it highly "rash and presumptuous to form arguments upon the supposed necessity or propriety of a divine interposition, in this or that particular case, and to decide upon the motives and views of the Deity by the narrow conceptions of human reason."* This is certainly a most just remark, in which we heartily join issue with the Doctor, especially under the authority of St. Paul, who, sensible of this great truth, cries out in a rapture of admiration, O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past find-ing out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? † And indeed, there is nothing wherein our modern Christian infidels more manifestly expose the impiety of their presumption, than by their pretences of this kind,—canvassing the ways of God by their narrow conceptions, and reducing the works of the Omnipotent to the examination of their presumptuous judgment, and boldly deciding, by the feeble efforts of their blinded understandings, what is becoming or unbecoming the Deity to do. Instead of this method of proceeding, the Doctor assures us with no less reason, that "the whole which the wit of man can possibly discover, either of the ways or will of the Creator, must be acquired by a contrary method; not by imagining vainly within ourselves what may be proper or improper for him to do but by looking abroad, and contemplating what he has actually done." This rule is most judicious, and contains a solid ground for us on which to proceed; for though there must be innumerable cases in which it will be most becoming the Almighty to act,—though we can by no means judge of their propriety a priori, yet certain it is, that God never will act either in the ordinary course of his providence, or by an extraordinary interposition, but when it is highly proper and becoming him to do so. Consequently, if we open our eyes, and contemplate what Almighty God has actually done, in certain circumstances and for certain ends, we may most reasonably conclude, that it is highly becoming him to act in the same manner in similar circumstances, and where the same ends are to be obtained; and from this solid principle we draw as an undoubted consequence, that it is then to be expected, and we may reasonably presume he will do However just and reasonable the above rule is, vet the Doctor is far from being so reasonable in the application of it; for he goes on to tell us, that the only way by which we are to know what God actually has done, is "by attending seriously to that revelation which he made of himself from the beginning, and placed continually before our eyes, in the wonderful works and beautiful fabric of this visible world." Here the Doctor is doubtless much to be blamed; for though it might do very well from a Deist, who acknowledges no revelation made by God but in the works of the creation, to admit no other way of knowing what he has done but by contemplating these works, yet surely it is ridiculous in a Christian,—and such the Doctor professes himself to be,-who believes the sacred scriptures to be the word of God, to act in this manner; these sacred writings contain an ample account of the conduct of the Almighty in a great variety of particular cases concerning the affairs of man, and of the dispositions of his providence in the government of this universe: consequently, not only in the works of the creation, but also by considering the divine oracles of the scriptures, we have a most ample field wherein to contemplate what God has actually done in innumerable cases, and thence to conclude with the greatest confidence, what is at all times becoming him to do, when such, or similar cases occur.

III. It is upon this ground our presumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation of miracles is founded; and from this we see, at first view, the wide difference there is between the nature of this presumptive evidence brought by us, and that which is used by Dr. Middleton, and all his protestant adversaries, for their systems. Theirs is founded upon this general postulatum, "the exigencies of the church," which every one of them applies and interprets according to his own fancy, "judging of the views and motives of the Deity by the narrow conceptions of human reason," for which the Doctor justly ridicules others, though he also uses it when it serves his own turn. The presumptive evidence 1 propose to bring forward is founded upon solid facts recorded for our instruction by the authority of God himself, and from which the conclusion flows with the most undoubted certainty; so that, though I call it presumptive evidence, yet when its force is thoroughly considered, and well comprehended, it will be admitted to be without exception, presumptive evidence of a degree bordering nearly upon absolute proof, if not entirely such.

IV. But though the Doctor is justly blamed, as a Christian, for confining the means of knowing what-God has actually done to the contemplation of the works of creation, and for excluding, by that limitation, all the knowledge of his operations which we derive from his holy scriptures; yet doubtless the works of creation are not to be rejected for this purpose. On the contrary, they also afford us a most noble field for such contemplation, and a presumptive proof of the continuation of miracles. When treating of the ends of miracles

as discovered to us by the light of reason, we considered the glorious fabric of this visible creation; we examined the nature of good and evil with relation to different creatures; we compared the material part of the creation with the rational and intelligent, in order to discov er their respective value; we considered the intention and views which God had in the inanimate creation, and in all those laws by which the material world is governed; we took a view of the beneficent purpos s which manifestly appear throughout the whole creation; and from our reasonings on these heads, confirmed also by revelation, we drew as a necessary consequence,— "That the rational and intelligent creatures are by far the chief and most excellent part of the creation: That without them all the rest are of little or no importance: That they are the principal object of the care and attention of the Creator: That all other inferior beings are made to be, either mediately or immediately, subservient to their happiness and perfection, and are of no use but for this purpose; and therefore, as the whole present order and laws of nature are established as subservient to these great ends, and for promoting by them the glory of the Creator, it is not only reasonable, but most highly becoming and worthy of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, to suspend any of these laws, and alter the present order of things, or to perform any other miraculous effect he pleases, when the promotion of his own honour and glory, either by procuring the happiness and perfection of his rational creatures, or by averting their misery and moral turpitude, or even by inflicting just punishment upon them, may require his doing so. Nay, should the case happen wherein these ends could not so properly nor so perfectly be attained by other ordinary means, it would then be not only becoming Almighty God, but it would even in some sort be incumbent on him to work a miracle in order to procure them." And in the same chapter we showed at large that miracles are always much more efficacious means for procuring happiness and moral good, and for preventing misery and

moral evil in intelligent creatures, than all the o her ordinary means by the agency of second causes can be; and therefore, that Almighty God not only may, but that it is most becoming his divine goodness to use them, from time to time, for such ends Now, our reasonings on this subject are neither restrained to time nor place; they have equal force in all countries and in all ages; they are as convincing under the gospel as under the law; in the nineteenth century of Christianity, as in the times of the apostles. Consequently, wherever the happiness or moral perfection of rational creatures is to be promoted, and especially where ordinary means are found ineffectual or less proper, it is highly becoming the divine goodness to interpose by miracles for so worthy and so laudable a purpose; and therefore it is highly reasonable to presume he will, from time to time, continue to do so throughout all ages, to the end of the world. Thus, even from that limited view of the divine conduct assigned by Dr. Middleton, we find in the contemplation of the visible creation, a very strong and just presumption to believe, that Divine Wisdom has by no means confined the working of miracles to any particular period of time; but that as the happiness and perfection of his rational creatures will be a continual object of his desire while time endures, so it will, at all times, be highly becoming his goodness to perform miracles in order to procure them. But if we consider that more extensive view of God's works, which he has discovered to us in his holy scriptures, we shall there find much greater grounds to be thoroughly convinced that miracles will never cease in the church of Christ while the world stands. Now, these grounds are taken from the following sources: 1. From the conduct of God in the old law. 2. From the conduct of Jesus Christ in the gospel. 3. From the promises of Christ. And, 4. From what we are told will happen at the end of the world. Each of these we must consider separately by the light which revelation gives us concerning them. V We learn from holy Writ, that when man had lost

himself by sin, and was become a prey to the delusions of Satan, this impious spirit endeavoured to extend his empire over the whole universe, and become sole master of the hearts of men: That although Almighty God had determined, out of his infinite mercy, to redeem lost man, and restore him to that happiness of which he had been deprived by sin, yet, for His just and wise purposes, He delayed this great work for many ages, and in the mean time permitted man to be deluded by the devil, and hurried on by him to every excess of wickedness and vice, that by this means his pride might be confounded, and by this dear-bought experience he might be convinced of his own extreme misery and weakness, and of the great need he had of a Redeemer. But whilst the generality of mankind were thus abandoned to themselves, Almighty God was pleased to select one nation from among the rest, whom he preserved from this general corruption, and to whom he made an express revelation of himself and of his will, of the religious worship which he required from them, and of the law by which he commanded them to walk. This revelation was made by means of Moses and the prophets, to whom God communicated his will, and gave authority in his name to announce it to his people. But it was extremely imperfect when compared to what was afterwards to be made by the Redeemer, who, as was often foretold by the holy prophets, would come in the fulness of time to give a perfect revelation of the will of God to men, discover to them the secrets of the divine wisdom, bring all nations to the knowledge of the true God, and teach them a more holy law, and a more perfect worship, of which all that had been taught by Moses was only a shadow, a figure, and an emblem. In the mean time, the great God showed a particular care of his favourite people, whom he made the depositaries of his divine oracles, and sent them his holy servants from time to time, to teach, instruct, exhort. and preserve them in his service. At last the Redeemer himself appears invested with the attributes of Omni-

potence, by which he gave the most convincing preofs of his mission, fulfilled and abolished the Mosaic institution, and revealed to the world that pure and holy religion which was to be the only means of salvation to mankind, and which was therefore to be the religion of all nations, and to continue to the end of the world. Here, then, we find that Almighty God has made two distinct external revelations of his will to men,—the one by Moses, the other by Jesus Christ his son. The former was very imperfect both with regard to the knowledge it discovered of God and of heavenly things, and with regard to the nature of the worship required by it from man; the latter was full and ample in both these respects, giving us a most glorious knowledge of God and of the next world, and discovering to us a most pure and holy worship due to the Sovereign Being from us his creatures. The Mosaic institution, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, was only a shadow of the good things to come,—a figure and emblem of the religion of Jesus, and was therefore incapable of cleansing the soul from sin, and of perfectly reconciling man with his offended Creator. The Christian religion is the substance of what the former was only the shadow, and contains in itself every celestial grace and benediction necessary for the perfect sanctification of our souls, and for bringing us to the possession of eternal happiness. The religion of Moses was temporary, and to last only · till the Redeemer should appear and abolish it, being only intended to prepare the world for receiving the more perfect religion of Jesus, which was confined to no space of time, but to last till the end of the world. Finally, the law of Moses was given only to one nation, and confined to one people; the law of grace under Jesus Christ was intended for all nations, to bring all tothe knowledge and service of the true God, and to be established from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

VI. Jesus Christ being come into the world, the law of Moses was thereby abolished, and an end put to his

institution, that the more perfect religion of Jesus might be established in its place. Now, Almighty God has been pleased to give us a particular history, authorised by himself, of the conduct of his divine providence during the whole time the Mosaic institution had its being. In this history we have an account of vast numbers of miracles actually performed by God on different occasions, and for many different ends and purposes during all that period. From this account we evidently see, by the authority of God himself, on what occasions, and for what ends it is worthy of Almighty God, and becoming his divine goodness, to work miracles. If then we find, that the same occasions must often occur, and the same or similar endshe every day to be promoted in all ages of Christianity, to the very end of time, it must follow of course, that it will at all times be equally worthy of Almighty God, and equally becoming his goodness, to perform miracles on these occasions, and for promoting these ends; and if it be, indeed, becoming God to act in this manner, we have the strongest reason to presume, that he will, at least, from time to time, continue to do so at every age to the end of the world. Nay, we shall find, when we come to consider the particular cases, that there is much greater reason to expect this in the Christian church than there was under the law; and therefore, if it was becoming Almighty God to work miracles in all ages under the law, and that he actually did so, it is much more becoming him to work them in every age under the gospel, and we may with g eater reason expect that he will actually do so.

VII. In showing the ends of miracles from revelation, I have given above an ample detail of the various occasions on which Almighty God wrought miracles under the law, and of the several ends he had in view in doing so. Some of these tended more immediately to promote the divine glory by the general good of the whole people; others seemed to have for their more immediate object the perfection of happiness of particular persons only; though, by being afterwards published to the world, they

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contributed no less than the former to the divine glory and the good of mankind, as to their grand and ultimate end. Of the first kind were chiefly these following: 1. To convince mankind that the doctrine preached to them by those who wrought these miracles in the name of God, was truly his doctrine, and thereby to engage them the more readily to receive it, and the more steadfastly to adhere to the belief and profession of it.-2. To defend the doctrine thus revealed to them, and preserve the religion he had given his people against all attempts that were made in after-ages to corrupt and destroy it. 3. To assert his own honor against all false gods, and their idolatrous worship. 4. To engage his people to believe and trust in him, to love him, to obey him, and to serve him only, and thus to promote the sanctification and perfection of their souls. 5. To assert and vindicate the honor of his priest-hood, and of all those holy things which were more immediately used in his service, and to procure due respect and veneration to be paid them. 6. To manifest the sanctity of those holy people whom he sends from time to time as his messengers to mankind, and to gain due respect and credit for them, that, by their words and example, others may be stirred up to greater piety and fervour. 7. To convince idolaters, and those who know him not, that he is the only true God, when at any time he is pleased to communicate the knowledge of himself and of his holy will to them.

Of the second kind, where the immediate end intended was the benefit only of particular persons, we considered four different classes. The first contains those cases where Almighty God communicating any truth, or giving any commission, or making any promise to any particular person, either by himself immediately, or by others commissioned for this purpose, was pleased to convince them, by working miracles, that those things were really from him, and not delusions. The second contains those cases where we find Almighty God condescending to work miracles in favour of particular per-

sons as a reward of their virtuous actions, particularly their acts of charity towards their fellow-creatures in distress, their confidence in his goodness, and their constancy in his service. In the third class I collected those examples where we find the divine goodness working miracles, and frequently of the very first order, merely to supply the bodily wants of particular persons; and that sometimes where the wants were of so little consequence, as to unassisted natural reason would seem perfectly trifling, and altogether unworthy of such divine The last class contains those cases where interposition. Divine Wisdom was pleased to work most amazing miracles, for the punishment or correction of sinners, as the immediate end intended, and for the manifestation and exaltation of his justice in those who rejected the offers of his mercy.

VIII. It cannot be denied by any Christian, that all these ends and occasions of miracles were most worthy of God, and that it was highly becoming his divine wisdom to perform the most stupendous miracles in order to procure them. To deny this were to impeach the Divine Wisdom of folly, since we find in fact, that for these very ends God did, on many occasions, perform the most amazing miracles. Now, if it was thus becoming God, and worthy of him to perform miracles on such occasions and for these ends, in the old law, it must at least be equally becoming him on all such occasions, and for obtaining such ends, to act in the same manner in the new law. It would be tedious to illustrate this in each particular case: I shall therefore confine myself

to some few of the most remarkable.

IX. The Christian religion assures us, as we have seen above, that Almighty God has been pleased to make two distinct revelations of himself to man; the one less perfect by Moses, the other most ample and perfect by Jesus Christ. As in the first of these he disclosed to mankind several important truths concerning himself, and laid down a body of laws which he required should be faithfully observed by his people, it was

necessary they should be thoroughly convinced that this revelation was from him, the Creator and sovereign Lord of the whole universe. Doubtless he could have infused into their minds a thorough knowledge and full conviction of these things, without having recourse to any exterior means whatever; but this would have been acting in a supernatural manner, and by no means conformable to the state and condition of mankind; it would moreover have been forcing conviction upon them, wherein their free-will could have had no share. method, in fact, he did not use, but giving commission to his servant Moses, a man like themselves, to declare his will to his people, he thought it worthy his infinite goodness to work the most amazing miracles by the hand of Moses in their presence, as the most convincing proofs that he was authorized by Him in all that he had told them. Now, these were proofs entirely adapted to their state and condition,—falling under the testimony of their senses, and subjected to their scrutiny and examination. But though these proofs carried along with them the strongest conviction of the truth of what Moses taught them, yet they did not necessitate their free-will, nor force the people to believe what was attested by them; nay, we find in fact, that notwithstanding those proofs, they often rebelled against the light that attended them, and murmured against Moses, as if he had deceived them. Hence, in receiving this revelation as from God, and subjecting themselves to this law as coming from him, their service in this was a reasonable, free, and voluntary service, such as God chiefly requires from his reasonable creatures. Hence then, it was not only becoming the divine wisdom to confirm this revelation by miracles, but it was even necessary he should do so, in the supposition that he wanted such a voluntary service from his people, as miracles were the only proper means of procuring such service from them.

X. Now then, if this was the case with the first revelation which God made of his will to mankind;—if it was becoming his divine goodness, and worthy of him

to confirm it by miracles; if it was even necessary he should do so, in order to obtain a reasonable and voluntary service from his people, -it follows, as a necessary consequence, that it must be no less becoming his divine goodness to act in the same manner when he made his second and more perfect revelation to the world. And a little attention will show that the necessity of his doing so was much greater in this last case than in the former. For, in the first place, the truths he revealed by Jesus Christ concerning himself and supernatural things, were vastly more sublime, more incomprehensible, more spiritual than those he revealed by Moses; and yet he demands the most submissive belief of them from mankind. The law promulgated by Jesus Christ was by far more holy, more opposite to self-love, more contrary to all the desires and inclinations of our corrupt nature than the law of Moses, and yet he requires the most perfect obedience to it; the sacrifice of our heart, and of all our affections, and the mortification of all our carnal desires; and the sanctity and perfection which God demands from us under the gospel, is vastly greater and more sublime than what he required under the law From all which it follows of course, that if it was necessary to work miracles in order to procure credit to the revelation of the law, which was less perfect, and where the belief and practice of things less difficult to flesh and blood, and more agreeable to all our natural inclinations. were required; it must certainly be much more necessary to make use of the same most powerful means, in order to convince mankind of the divine revelation of the gospel, where so much more incomprehensible truths are proposed to our belief, and such greater perfection is required from us in practice. Besides, in the revelation made by Moses, the people were expressly forbid to give ear to any one who should invite them to leave their religion, even though he should appeal to signs, and those signs should come to pass; it was therefore most necessary when the gospel was revealed, by which the law was abolished, and a more pure and holy wor-

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ship instituted in its place, not only that miracles should be performed in confirmation of it, but even that these miracles should be so extraordinary, both in their greatness and number, as to over-rule the above prohibition, and convince the Jews that the Author of this revelation was the expected Messias, who, they knew, was to come for this very purpose. Lastly, the revelation made by Moses was made to a people already acquainted with the true God, the children of the patriarchs, who had the memory of the promises made by God to their fathers quite recent and common among them; who were at the time it began to be made in a state of cruel slavery, from which the first step of this revelation was to deliver them; all which of course powerfully disposed their minds to receive and embrace it: -whereas the revelation of the gospel was chiefly intended for the Heathen world, a people absolutely ignorant of the true God, drowned in the grossest idolatry, sunk in all manner of vice and wickedness, whose principles, practices and affections, were all diametrically opposite to the pure maxims contained in that revelation. Consequently, if it was not only worthy of God, but even necessary to work miracles for the establishment of the Mosaic revelation, though the people to whom it was made were so much disposed to receive it; how much more worthy o... the divine goodness,—yea, how much more necessary was it, to work more and greater miracles in order to establish the gospel among a people from whom, on so many accounts, it was destined to meet the greatest and most inveterate opposition? If, therefore, it was so worthy of God to do this, and so necessary for the purpose he intended of subjecting all nations to the voke of -Christ, we have strong and well grounded reason to expect he would actually do so.

XI. But we must further observe, that as the gospel revelation was intended not for one nation only, as was that of Moses, but for all the nations in the world; and as all these nations were equally ignorant of the true God, and guided by principles and affections equally

opposite to the rules of the gospel when it first appeared among them, the necessity of miracles to over-rule all opposition, and conquer the force of prejudice and selflove, was not confined to its first appearance in one or two nations only, but was equally great in every nation wherever it was first preached; therefore, it was equally worthy of God, in all these different nations, to introduce the knowledge and belief of the gospel among them, by working miracles for that end. And as the knowledge of the gospel was not to be communicated to all nations at once, but was, by the disposition of the Divine Providence, to be the work of many succeeding ages, even till near the end of the world, before the whole should be completed, we have here the same strong and well founded presumption, as above, to expect that the miraculous powers will continue in the church of Christ throughout all ages, and never fail to be exerted, when new Heathen nations are to be brought to the knowledge and belief of the gospel, by those holy souls whom God shall be pleased to raise up and employ for that purpose.

XII. Doctor Middleton, indeed, makes a great parade of the "genuine strength of the gospel, and the natural force of those divine graces with which it was so richly stored,-Faith, Hope and Charity;" and pretends in his preface to the Free Inquiry, that "as soon as Christianity had gained an establishment in every quarter of the known world," which he thinks might have happened before the death of all the apostles, there was no more need for miracles, which, he concludes, were then finally withdrawn, and "the gospel left to make the rest of its way by its genuine strength," and the above divine graces. As this is an argument not only made use of by Dr. Middleton to prove the cessation of miracles in the apostolic age, but also by some of his Protestant adversaries to prove their cessation after the respective periods assigned by them; for they all pretend that the exigencies of the church being the only reason why miracles were wrought, and these exigencies continuing as long as they are pleased to think proper—and no longer, on their cessation miracles ought to cease also, and as this argument, as dressed up by these gentlemen, has a specious appearance, it is necessary to examine what real worth it contains.

XIII. I would ask these gentlemen what they mean by "the genuine strength of the gospel, and those. divine graces, Faith, Hope and Charity, with which it is so richly stored?" If they mean, that when the gospel is once cordially received and embraced by any person or people, and these divine virtues have taken full possession of their hearts, it is then capable of producing the most admirable effects in their souls, by the change it works in their sentiments, in their hearts, in their affections, and in their whole conduct and behaviour; it will be readily allowed that its strength in this respect is most admirable. To be convinced of this we need only read the wonderful effects it produced in the apostles themselves, and in the first converted Christians, as related in the holy scriptures; but in this sense it is nothing at all to their purpose. If they mean, that when the gospel is thus received and embraced by any whole nation, and established in it by law, that there is no more need of miracles to induce that nation to receive and embrace it; this also will be readily granted, but is as little to their purpose as the former. If they mean, that when a considerable number in any nation have cordially embraced the gospel, the strength of their faith, hope, and charity will be sufficient to enable it to make its way through all the rest of thet nation, and convert the whole, without the help of miracles-this is certainly false, and contrary to experi-No doubt the sanctity and virtue of Christians is a great argument in favour of their religion, but too weak alone to induce Heathens, who have little notion of true virtue, to embrace it. Were there ever more holy or more virtuous and perfect Christians than the apostles and their converts? Yet their virtue and holiness were not the means by which they converted

others, but the miracles they wrought and to which they always appealed as proofs of the doctrine they taught. If they mean, that if Christianity be once fully established in any one large country, such as was the Roman empire, it then acquires sufficient strength to spread itself through the other nations by the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, without the further aid of miracles; this is no less false and contrary to experience than the former case. Lastly, if they mean, that when Christianity is once fully established in any country, the solid reasons that can be given to prove its truth, and the motives of credibility alleged in its favour, are sufficient to convince any reasonable man of its divine origin; this will readily be acknowledged with regard to the people of that country who have been brought up from their infancy in the knowledge of it, provided they believe all these motives of credibility on which it is founded, and of which the miracles wrought at its first establishment certainly constitute one of the most important; but experience shows, that all these motives of credibility are too weak to convince even those of such a country who, though educated in the knowledge of Christianity, happen to become afterwards Atheists, or Deists, for they deny the existence of miracles at its first establishment, and would need other miracles performed before their own eyes to convince them. Now, if this be the case, even in those who have had the advantage of a Christian education, what is to be expected from a poor barbarous Heathen nation sunk in ignorance and vice, and whose principles, affections, and practices, are as diametrically opposite to the pure maxims of the gospel, as those of the Romans were when it first appeared among them? But let us illustrate this by a particular case, which will at once show the force of my arguments. Let us suppose, then, that not only the Roman empire, but that all Europe had cordially embraced the gospel; that, like the first Christians, they continued "steadfast in the doctrine of the apostles, and had all but one mind and

one soul;" that faith, hope and charity had taken such deep root in their hearts, that they were all without exception perfect Christians:—surely if ever the genuine strength of the gospel appeared in the world, it would appear in this case. Let us suppose further, that many learned men among them, had displayed in the strongest light, and in all the pomp of eloquence, the powerful motives of credibility in proof of the truth of their religion; yet what would all this signify to the conversion of the people of China, for example, or of Japan, or the wild Indians of America? Let a number of European missionaries burning with zeal, and full of faith, hope and charity; go among these people, suppose them to learn their language, and preach the gospel among them, would all they could say, without the help of miracles, be more effectual to convert these people, than what the zeal of the apostles was in their fervent preachings to the Heathen world in their days? And, if miracles were necessary to give a sanction to what the apostles taught, notwithstanding their sanctity and zeal, will they not be at least equally so in the other case, even though we suppose the sanctity and zeal of these preachers to be equal to that of the apostles? Will not the doctrine of the cross appear as great "folly" on being proposed to the Chinese and Indians, as it did when proposed to the Romans? Would not all the mysteries of the gospel be as incomprehensible to those nations as they were to the Gentiles in the days of the apostles? Would not the passions, and prejudices, and vices of these nations, be as great an obstacle to their embracing the pure maxims of the gospel, as those of the Heathens were at its first promulgation? If it be said that the solid reasons and motives of credibility could be displayed to these people to convince them; it must be remembered, that the chief and most essential of these motives are the miracles wrought at the first establishment of Christianity; and must not these appear as incredible to a nation that never heard of them before, as the very mysteries themselves, of which they are

the proof? Besides, the motives of credibility would only be for the learned; the great multitude of the people could not devote sufficient time and attention to penetrate and comprehend them, If, therefore, when the gospel is first proposed to any Heathen nation, the obstacles and difficulties it must have to encounter, both from its own doctrines and maxims, and from the passions, prejudices and vices of men, and we may add also, from the endeavours of the devil to oppose it, be no less in all succeeding ages, than at its first appearance in the world, it must of course be no less worthy of God, and no less necessary for converting any nation, to work miracles for their conversion in every succeeding age to the end of the world, than it was at the first establish-

ment of Christianity.

XIV. This will still further appear, when we consider, that under the Mosaic dispensation, when Almighty God wanted to bring even particular persons among the Heathens to the knowledge of himself and of what was then his true religion, he made use of miracles as the proper and convenient means for this purpose. We have seen above, that he looked upon this as an end most worthy of such divine interposition; thus he miraculously cured Naaman's leprosy, to procure by this means his conversion. The miraculous preservation of the three children in the fiery furnace, and of Daniel in the lions' den, most effectually convinced two great and powerful Heathen kings that the God whom these holy men served was the only true God, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. If, then, it was worthy of Almighty God, and becoming his divine wisdom and goodness, to work such glorious miracles under the law, with a view to convince individual men of his being the true God, even so many ages after that law was established among his people, how much more worthy of him must it be to work miracles in every age of his church, when the conversion of whole nations to the faith of Christ is the end to be gained by them?

XV. The preservation of the true religion, once es-

tablished, from all attempts to corrupt or destroy it, is another glorious end which, as we have seen above, Almighty God judged most worthy of himself to procure under the law, by working, on all such occasions, in whatever age they happened, the most amazing miracles; and this he did, whether these attempts were made by open force, or secret fraud; whether the danger arose from Heathens persecuting from without, or from impious men among the people of God themselves.* Now, from this conduct of the Divine Wisdom under the law, the probability and presumption of his observing the same conduct under the gospel, is exceedingly strong. The works of God are not like the works of men, subject to be corrupted and destroyed by numberless accidents, contrary to the will and design of those who perform them. When Almighty God performs any work, no power of man, no malice of hell can possibly destroy it against his will, nor disappoint his views and designs in performing it; "Not a hair of your head falls to the ground without your heavenly Father," as we are assured by Christ himself. Now, when the law was given by Moses, and the whole ceremonial of religion ordained among that people, the design of Almighty God was that this religion should continue to be professed and practised by them till the coming of the Messias; that whilst the rest of mankind were, by his ancomprehensible judgments, permitted to follow their own inventions, and to be led away by the delusions of Satan, there might never be wanting at least one nation, wherein the worship of the true God should be preserved and practised. Almighty God, then, having thus determined that this religion should continue on earth among his chosen people till the Redeemer should come to perfect it, we find that, whenever any attempt was made against it, he was never wanting to defend it, by working most glorious miracles, as the proper and connatural means for that purpose. If now we examine

^{*} See this illustrated at large by nur grous examples in chap, vi.

the idea the scripture gives us of the doctrine taught by C-rist, and of the duration of the Christian religion in to world, we shall find from the most assured declarat ons of God himself, that when he instituted that relicion, it was his express design that the purity of his true octrine should never be corrupted in his church, and - hat this holy religion should remain to the end of ages, n spite of all attempts to destroy it. Among the many testimonies of holy writ for this purpose, the following are particularly beautiful. In Isaiah, chapter lix. 19, Almighty God makes this glorious promise to the Christian church; "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun: when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Now let any person of common sense consider these words attentively, and say if it was possible to declare, in stronger terms, that the Spirit of God should never leave the true posterity of Jesus Christ, and that the pure doctrine once revealed to them should never depart from among them while the world endureth; nay, Almighty God expressly declares, that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," and attempt to corrupt or destroy the work of God, his holy Spirit always abiding with his church, "shall lift up a standard against him," to preserve the purity of the truth once put in her mouth, against all the rage and fury of the enemy, and his utmost efforts to destroy it. Another glorious promise to the same purpose we have in Psalm lxxxix. 3, where God says, "I have made a covenant with my chesen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed Vol., II.-12

will-I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations."* "I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever and his throne as the days of heaven.-Once have I sworn in my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." This beautiful promise, confirmed by a solemn oath, that Christ, the true David, should reign for ever, that the church, his kingdom, should last to the end of ages, and that his seed should endure whilst the sun and moon had their being, needs no application; it speaks for itself in the plainest terms. It is also again confirmed by the angel Gabriel, and expressly applied to Christ, when he told the blessed Virgin, that her son should sit "on the throne of his father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom," said he, "there shall be no end."+ Christ himself assures us of the same truth, when he says, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." In which words he declares the perpetual stability of his church by the solid foundation on which she is built. He foretells indeed, that the gates of hell shall not be wanting in their continual attempts to destroy her, but all to no purpose; for he, at the same time, passes his sacred word, that they shall never be able to prevail against her. Nay, in the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters of St. John he assures us, that after his ascension into heaven, he would send the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, upon his followers, who, "shall abide with them for ever;" and that his office should be, to "teach them all truth," in which promise he verifies what Almighty God had said by Isaiah many ages before, that the holy Spirit to be given to the Redeemer, and the

^{*} Verse 27, &c.

"words once put in his mouth should never depart from the mouth of his seed, from henceforth and for ever."

XVI. From these clear and plain testimonies of the word of God, the following truths manifestly flow: 1. That the kingdom of Christ, his church, shall continue till the end of ages, whilst the sun and moon endureth. 2. That the true doctrine revealed by him to his church, the words which he puts in her mouth shall never depart out of her mouth, but continue to be constantly taught and professed by her, from henceforth and for ever. 3. That the enemy, the gates of hell, shall no fail to assault her with all their power, coming upon her like a flood, and like a torrent to overwhelm and destroy her. But, 4. That God will never be wanting on all these occasions, to protect and defend her; that the spirit of the Lord, her guardian and teacher, shall lift up a standard against the enemy, which will baffle all his attempts, so that hell's proud gates shall never prevail against her: nay, instead of prevailing, we are further assured, 5 That those wicked men whom the enemy shall stir up as his instruments to fight against Christ and his church, shall themselves be brought to ruin and desolation, as the just punishment of their impious attempts. "Behold," says Almighty God, fore-telling the attempts of wicked men against his church, "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me;" but he immediately adds their doom, "Whoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn,"* To the same purpose he speaks in Psalm lxxxix. above-cited, where, after the promises made to Christ, the true David, he adds, "The enemy shall not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him, and I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him."+

XVII. That these prophecies which foretell the violence of those attempts the enemy would make against the church of Christ, have been literally fulfilled we are fully assured from the histories of all ages. No sooner did she begin to appear in the world, and send out her zealous pastors to declare the glad tidings of salvation to mankind, than immediately the most violent and bloody persecutions were excited against her; hell seemed to be let loose upon her, and having engaged the greatest powers upon earth in its party, and inflamed the most violent passions and utmost malice of the heart of man, aimed at nothing less than crushing her in the bud, and destroying her entirely upon her first appearance. But all in vain; -her divine spouse lifted up his standard in her defence, her foes were beat down before her face, idolatry that rose up against her fell for her sake, and she at last gloriously triumphed over all these her enemies. Scarce was peace, from without, restored to the church by the conversion of the Roman emperors, when the powers of hell attacked her in another, but more dangerous manner. Though driven out of one strong hold, they did not give over their attempts; they shifted their ground, but laid not aside their malice. Finding her an over-match for them in the open field, they resolved to attack her in covert ambush, hoping to obtain by secret fraud what they found was impossible by open force; and as they saw they were not able by persecutions to extinguish her faith, they endeavoured by heresies to corrupt it, and of course entirely destroy it. St. Paul foreseeing the unrelenting attempts of Satan for this purpose, foretells that "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest,"* thereby pointing out to us the reason why the divine wisdom would allow these things, to wit, for the greater merit of his faithful servants who should stand fast to their duty under all these dangers. Now, to promote this design against

the church with the greater certainty, Satan makes use of her own rebellious children, men, as St. Paul describes them, "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." These, the better to accomplish their ends, though "rapacious wolves," yet cloak themselves with 'sheep's clothing,' "having a form, (outward show,) of godliness, but denying the power thereof, men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith."* Men of this kind the devil stirs up from among the children of the church, who, as the same great apostle tells us, "Depart from the true faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their consciences seared as with a hot iron."+ And having thus corrupted their own faith, and hardened them in his service, he makes use of them to spread his diabolical doctrines among others, to seduce the faithful by corrupting them with false tenets, and if possible, to make lies and falsehood triumph over the truths of Jesus. But all in vain; the same divine power which protected the spouse of Christ from open force, we are assured shall equally defend her from these secret snares. Through the unsearchable judgments of God these dangerous attempts shall prevail with many, but when they have come to the length permitted by divine providence, we are assured, by the same great apostle, that then "they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be made manifest to all men."; St. Peter also, d scribing these dangerous attempts of Satan against the truth, speaks thus: "There shall be false teachers among you, who, privily, shall bring in damnable heresies;" but he immediately assures us, that "they bring upon themselves swift destruction; and though he also lets us know, that "many shall follow their pernicious ways by whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of;"

^{• 2} Fim. iii † 1 Tim. iv. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 9. Vol.• II.—13*

yet he immediately adds, that "their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." From these graphical descriptions given us by these two apostles, we see displayed to us the nature of those most violent and dangerous snares which the gates of hell would use in all ages against the church, but we are assured at the same time, as we have seen above was foretold by the prophets, that they should "never prevail against her, that they should proceed no farther, that they should fall for her sake, and their damnation should not slumber:" that is to say, we are assured that whilst God permits the devil to rage against his church, by endeavoring to corrupt the purity of her doctrine by damnable heresies, he never fails at the same time to defend her truth, to manifest their folly, and give her in the end a triumphant victory over all their attempts.

XVIII. Now what are the means which we may expect the divine wisdom will make use of for this purpose? The invincible fortitude of martyrs? The heroic constancy of confessors? The zealous labours of the church pastors? No doubt all these things will contribute greatly to confirm the faithful, and defend the purity of the true doctrine. But these alone will not be sufficient; nay, all these in some degree are to be found even among heretics. Heresy has had its martyrs, who, blinded by their passions, and hardened by enthusiasm, have gone to death in profession of their false doctrines. Heresy has also had its confessors, who have suffered imprisonment and banishment for its sake. The character which St. Paul gives of heretics, is, to put on a "form of godliness," an out ward show of piety, of zeal, of virtue; and experience, shows the indefatigable labours which many heretics have taken to propagate their sect, and corrupt the minds of the faithful. In fact, we find in the sacred scripture that these things alone did not suffice to de fend the true religion under the law when exposed to

such dangers and that therefore, Almighty God himself, judged it necessary and altogether becoming his divine wisdom, to raise up another more efficacious standard topreserve it. In the dangerous attempts against the true religion made by Jezebel and Achab, there were martyrs, for Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord;* there were confessors, for Obadiah "hid a hundred of them by fifties in a cave, and fed them with bread and water;"† there were zealous pastors—the great Elijah who alone was worth thousands—who did not fail to stand up as a wall in defence of the truth, and to reprove the king for his impiety, threatening him with the divine justice if he persisted in it. But were all these sufficient to confirm the people and defend the truth? No; they still halted between two opinions, many of them bowed their knees to Baal, and were upon the point of entirely forsaking the God of their fathers. For this reason the holy prophet, full of zeal for the glory of his Master, had recourse to the all-powerfull standard of miracles; and no sooner did these appear, than the clouds were dispelled from the minds of the people,-their doubts were cleared,—their faith confirmed, and with one voice they all cried out, "The Lord he is God! The Lord he is God." Miracles, then, are the proper arms to defend the truth when attacked by error; they are the most effi-cacious means to convince the human heart, because they are the language of God himself, which can never be spoken by his enemies;—they are the broad seal of heaven, confirming the doctrine of God beyond all reply. Hence we find, as we have seen above at large. that, during the whole period of the Mosaic institution, whenever the true religion was attacked by its enemies, the great God never failed to use these powerful means to defend it; from which we draw this undeniable consequence, that if it was worthy of God, and becoming his divine wisdom and goodness, to defend his true religion under the law, by working most amazing mira-

cles on every occasion when it was in any danger, and that he actually did so in order thereby to preserve the purity of what was then his true religion during the period of its duration. How much more worthy is it of him,-how much more becoming his infinite wisdom and goodness to act in the same manner, and work the most glorious miracles in defence of the Christian faith, on all similar occasions to the end of time, when the gates of hell and the malice of man combine with united rage to destroy it? That he will in fact defend the true doctrine of his beloved Son from all such attempts to the end of the world, is undoubted; he has repeatedly promised, and sworn by his sacred name, that he will do so. That miracles are the most proper and most efficacious means for this purpose, is self-evident; that the using them for this end is worthy of Almighty God, and highly becoming his divine wisdom, is most certain from what he actually did, on all such occasions, under the law; therefore we have the highest presumptive argument and the strongest probability that he will continue to work miracles in defence of his truth, throughout all ages, even to the end of the world. Nay, more, as we have seen that, under the law, the other means of defending the truth without miracles were insufficient; and that miracles were therefore necessary for that purpose: are they less so under the gospel? At least, it cannot be denied that, if not absolutely necessary, they are certainly the most proper, the best suited to convince the human heart, and therefore the most efficacious means for the above purpose. And shall we say of the providence of God, who so liberally used these means in defence of his truth under the law, that it is barely probable he will use them for the same end under the gospel ! How ungenerous such a thought! how injurious to the divine wisdom! We have therefore, every reason to conclude, that the conduct of Almighty God under the law, in defending the purity of his holy religion by miracles, not only gives us the highest probability, but even a very strong degree of certainty, that he will

never be wanting under the gospel in using the same glorious means, from time to time in defence of his

truth, so long as the world endureth.

XIX. Here I cannot help expressing my astonishment at the conduct of those gentlemen who pretend torestrict the duration of miracles in the church to any certain period. Their reasoning on this matter appears to me one of the most humiliating examples I have met with, of the weakness of our boasted reason when engaged in a bad cause. However they disagree among themselves about the precise period to be assigned for the cessation of miracles, yet they are all most unanimous in giving the same reason for this pretended cessation, at the different periods they assign. As long, say they, as the church continued pure, the gift of miracles continued with her; but when the corruptions of Popery crept in,—when her doctrine was corrupted by superstition, -when "the Athanasian heresy," says Mr. Whiston, "was established by her councils, and she · became Athanasian, Anti-christian and Popish," then that glorious gift of miracles was withdrawn from her, and the devil substituted his lying wonders in their stead. Is it possible to hear them argue to this purpose without being filled with astonishment and indignation? With astonishment, to see men of sense and learning speak in a manner so unworthy of themselves; with indignation, to hear them speak in a way so injurious to Almighty God, and so contrary to every circumstance of his conduct as revealed to us in relation to this matter? Can. a serious Christian in his sober senses allow himself to believe, after what we have just now seen, that, at the very time when the truths of God are supposed to stand in the greatest need of his protection; -when the gatesof hell are prevailing over the church of Christ; - when the enemy, like a torrent, is upon the point of carrying all before him-that at that very time Almighty God should abandon his truth to be totally corrupted and defaced, -should give up his church as a prey to the enemy, and without the least opposition, allow him to

turn the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ into an adultress? Is it possible, I say, that a serious Christian can allow himself even to harbour such a thought, and not be shocked at the blasphemous supposition? And yet it is upon this blasphemous supposition, to wit, that God Almighty has altogether abandoned his church to the tyranny of Satan,-that he has proved false to all the solemn promises made to her,—that he has allowed the devil, for numbers of ages, to work lying signs and wonders to delude poor mortals. without giving them the least defence against them: It is, I say, upon this blasphemous supposition that all the various systems of Protestants to account for the cessation of miracles, are chiefly founded. The main reason alleged by them for this pretended cessation of miracles is the very one from which we ought to draw the contrary conclusion, if we argue from the conduct of God in the old law, from the perpetuity of the Christian faith, the stability of the church, and the solemn promises of Almighty God, made and confirmed by oath in the prophesies, and the like sacred promises made by Christ himself in the gospel. But to return-

XX. Another great end which Almighty God judged most worthy to procure by his divine interposition under the law was, to assert and vindicate the honour of his priesthood, and of all those holy thnigs which were more immediately used in his service, and to cause a proper respect and veneration to be paid to them. sacred scriptures are full of most amazing miracles wrought for these ends; several of the most remarkable of which I have related above. Now, from this conduct of Almighty God under the law, we have another strong presumptive argument for the perpetual continuation of miracles throughout all ages under the gospel, and which applies with much greater strength to the latter than to the former; for the priesthood of Aaron, and all the holy things used in the externals of that religion, were only shadows of the good things to come; but the priest. hood instituted by Jesus Christ was the substance of

which the other was only the figure. The priesthood of Aaron, and all its sacrifices and other functions, were incapable of cleansing our consciences from sin, or of conferring the grace of God on the soul. The functions annexed to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, by applying the merits of his passion and death to our souls, cleanse us from all our past sins, adorn our souls with the grace of God, and enable us to avoid sin for the time to come. The priesthood of Aaron and its functions were confined to one nation; that of Jesus Christ was extended to all nations from "the rising of the sun to the going down of the same." The priesthood of Aaron was to last only for a time, till the better things should come; that of Jesus Christ was to last till the end of the world, "whilst the sun and moon endured." Now then, if it was worthy of Almighty God to work miracles, -and those of the most amazing nature, to vindicate the sanctity of the priesthood, and of the holy things used in its ministry under the law,—though it was but a shadow, a figure, a temporary institution, and incapable of bringing grace to our souls, or cleansing away our sins; how much more worthy of his divine wisdom must it be to work miracles in order to vindicate the sanctity of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and of all the sacred utensils used in its functions, which so immensely exceed that of Aaron in holiness, excellency and utility? And if Almighty God did, in fact, perform many great miracles in defence of the former, we have thence a wellgrounded reason to presume to expect that he will be no less ready to do so in defence of the latter in all ages and in all nations, wherever the circumstances may require it.

XXI. Now the same train of reasoning may with equal force be applied to all the other ends for which God was pleased to work miracles under the law, and a little attention will evidently show, that wherever necessity, expediency, utility, congruency, or other such cause can be assigned, which made it worthy of God, and becoming His divine wisdom and goodness, to perform miracles for all such ends under the old law, as we see

in fact He did,—all concur with much greater force to show it vastly more worthy of him to act in the same manner for the same or similar ends under the gospel, and consequently we have from this the strongest presumption to expect he would do so. Hence, whether the end to be attained, be the renewing a spirit of fervour and devotion among his people in times of general relaxation; or the manifesting the sanctity of his holy servants that their words and example may make a deeper impression on the minds of others, and more powerfully incite them to virtue and piety; or the rewarding the heroic virtues of his holy servants, their charity, their confidence in his goodness, their constancy in his service, and the like; or the supplying their temporal necessities, especially such as they fall into for his sake and in his service; or the punishing and correcting sinners for a warning to others, and the greater exaltation of his justice; I say whichever of all these, or any other such holy ends we consider, for the obtaining of which Almighty God has in fact judged it worthy of himself to work most admirable miracles under the law, we shall find that all these must frequently occur in every nation, and in every age of the church till the end of time. And therefore as it must always be most worthy of God to work miracles for such ends -wherever they occur, we have a just and we'll grounded reason to presume that miracles will continue to be wrought, from time to time, in the true church of Christ, while the world endureth.

XXII. We come now to consider the second source of presumptive evidence for this truth, which is taken from the conduct of Jesus Christ in the gospel. In all I have hitherto said, I have not noticed any thing related in the New Testament; I have only considered what God has done under the Mosaic dispensation, and thence inferred what is becoming him to do under the gospel, and consequently what we may reasonably presume he would do. I have shown the ends which he himself judged worthy of a miraculous interpositon in every age

during the time of the old law, and thence concluded that the same ends must, with much greater reason, be judged worthy of a like miraculous interposition in every age during the time of the gospel. If now we go a step further, and take a view of what the holy scripture assures us Jesus Christ has actually done, both by himself, and after his ascension by his apostles; and if upon this examination we find, that both the general ends for which so many miracles were wrought by Christ and his apostles, and also the particular ends more immediately intended by them, were exactly the same, or perfectly similar to all those we have seen above; we will find from this another most convincing argument to presume and expect, that miracles will continue to be wrought in the church of Christ till the end of the world: for if Jesus Christ judged these ends worthy of miracles in his own days; if he continued to judge them worthy of miracles in the days of his apostles after he himself had left them, with what shadow of reason could it be alleged, that he would not judge them equally worthy of such divine interposition during every subsequent age of Christianity? Or rather is it not evident beyond reply, that as Almighty God actually wrought numberless miracles for these ends during every age of the old law, -and Jesus Christ most certainly did the same both by himself and his apostles during the first age of the gospel,—so we may with the highest reason expect he will continue to act in the same way in every succeeding age to the end of the world, wherever these ends are to be obtained by so doing? These ends are of the same importance wherever they occur in all ages and in all places, and no less worthy of a divine interposition at one time than at another. Let us then examine what the gospel teaches us on this matter.

XXIII. In our preceding reasoning from the conduct of God in the old law we concluded, that we had the justest ground to presume, that when the new and more perfect revelation was made by Jesus Christ, it would be introduced into the world by miracles; nay, that the

nature of the gospel, and the difficulties it had to meet with from the passions and prejudices of men, made it pecessary it should be confirmed at its first appearance. by the most splendid miracles. And lastly, as these difficulties would occur in all nations where it should be preached, it was to be presumed that miracles would continue to the end of the world, whenever the introduction of the gospel into any new nation or kingdom required it. Now, we find this conclusion literally verified by Jesus Christ and his apostles, in the first age of Christianity, The miracles he wrought himself during his first publication of it among the Jews, were magnificent and innumerable. All nature was at his command; the heavens and the earth, men, angels and devils were subservient to his will. After his ascension, the apostles whom he left to carry on the work which he had begun, behaved in the same manner. Miracles of the most amazing nature were wrought by their hands in proof of the heavenly doctrine they taught, the splendor of which admirable works converted vast multitudes of the people, both Jews and Samaritans, of all states and conditions, so that even "great multitudes of the priests themselves became obedient to the faith." The change of their manners was no less remarkable than that of their faith; they became Christians in perfection as well as in belief, and no force of persecution could shake their constancy and perseverance.

XXIV. Now, when the gospel had by this means obtained good ground in Judea and Samaria; when a numerous and flourishing church of Christians was set tled there; when these holy souls had arrived at the highest perfection, and breathed nothing but fervour and zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls, did Jesus Christ esteem their good example, their fervent preachings, their piety and zeal, a sufficient means, without any further help of miracles, to carry the gospel into other nations, even those in the neighborhood, and with whom they were well acquainted? By no means. He well knew that the opposition the gospel would meet

with every where at its first appearance, would be insur mountable by any natural means whatever, unless mark ed with his seal and confirmed by miracles, as the incontestable proofs that the doctrine was divine. Hence we find, that into whatever nation the apostles went to introduce our holy religion, God Almighty never failed. to accompany and confirm their words by signs and wonders. Thus in the short account St. Mark gives us of the propagation of the gospel after our Lord's ascension, he tells us, that the apostles "went forth and preached every-where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."* Paul also assures us, that whenever he went to plant the gospel, he did it "by mighty signs and wonders," + and puts the Corinthians in mind, that his preaching among them was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."; If, therefore, Jesus Christ judged it necessary for the introducing the gospel into any Heathen nation, to work miracles, even though the persons he employed for that end were the apostles, those fervent, zealous, holy souls, upon whom he had poured out the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and made them by far the fittest instruments that ever were employed for that purpose; how much more must he judge it necessary to work miracles for the same end in all after-ages, when the opposition and difficulties will be equal, and the instruments employed so much inferior to those great men who first planted the gospel in the world? From what God actually did under the old law, we saw it highly becoming him to act in this manner under the gospel. Jesus Christ, in fact, plants the gospel, and propagates it in many nations during the apostolic age by this very means. Therefore, it is a most just and reasonable conclusion to presume and expect he will continue to propagate it throughout all nations, in the same manner, till the end of the world.

XXV. To convince mankind of the sanctity of his

[•] Mark xvi 20.

servants; to procure credit and authority to them, ther by their words and example others may be stirred up to greater fervour and devotion; to restore by this means the decay of piety, which mankind is very apt to fall into unless roused up from time to time by some extraordinary means, is an end which we have seen Almighty God, under the law, judged most worthy of himself toprocure by the most splendid miracles; and thence we justly conclude, it was no less worthy of the same conduct from him under the gospel. In fact we find this end was most admirably procured, both by Jesus Christ. himself, and by his apostles: How were the people filled with gratitude and love to God! How did they break forth into his praises when they saw the miracles of our Saviour! "And there came a fear upon all, and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up amongst us, and God has visited his people." How were they astonished at the miracles of the apostles, so that none of the "others durst join to them, but all the people magnified them!" If, therefore, this was one of the principal fruits gained by the miracles of Christ and his apostles in their days, with what colour of reason can it be doubted, that the infinite goodness of God, which has nothing more at heart than the sanctification. of souls, will continue to the end of ages, at propertimes, to send his holy servants into the world to recall mankind to a just sense of their duty, to excite in them. a spirit of devotion, to restore decayed piety, to promotea greater fervour and zeal in his service; and that he, will confirm and authorize their words and example even by miracles wrought by their means for so noble an end?

XXVI. Another great end which we have seen most worthy of a divine interposition by miracles, was toprocure a just respect and veneration for those who are in priestly orders, and for all holy things. How does the conduct of Jesus Christ, by means of the apostles, authorize us to expect he will esteem this an end worthy of miracles throughout all ages? What respect, what

veneration must it have procured to St. Peter, when Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead at his feet for telling him a lie, and when this their crime in telling a lie to the chief pastor of the church, was declared to be telling a lie to the Holy Ghost himself? What high deas must it have given all the people of the sanctity, of the sacred dignity of this great apostle, when they saw that his very shadow passing over the sick, was able to cure them of whatever diseases they laboured under? What must they have thought of the sanctity of Saint Paul, when handkerchiefs and aprons, after touching his sacred body, were also enabled to cure all diseases? With what respect must they have kept these sacred relics? What veneration must they have paid to them, when they saw them so much hon-oured by Almighty God, as to be the miraculous instruments of so great benefits to them? Now, if from the conduct of Almighty God in the old law in regard to these things, we found it most reasonable to expect he would at all times, under the gospel, judge it worthy of himself to work miracles in order to procure respect to the priesthood and all holy things; and if we find, in fact, that Jesus Christ actually did so in the apostolic age, does not this give us the most convincing reason to presume, that he will continue to do so from time to time, as he sees occasion, in all future ages? If, in the old law, Almighty God was pleased to give so miraculous a proof of the sanctity of his holy servant Elijah. that, after he was taken from among men, the very mantle he had worn, and which, on his being taken up, he had left with Elisha, should, upon touching the waters of Jordan, be the instrument of dividing these waters into two parts, and leaving a passage upon dry ground for Elisha to get over; if he gave so extraordinary a proof of the sanctity of Elisha some time after his death, that a dead corpse being thrown upon his grave, and touching his sacred bones, should immediately have been restored to life; and if, under the gospel, in the apostolic age, he continues to act in the same manner, using

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the very shadow of St. Peter, and handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched the body of St. Paul, as instruments for miraculously curing all manner of diseases, thereby giving the most convincing proof of the supereminent sanctity of these his holy servants, can there be a greater proof to convince us that he at all times esteems this to be a manner of acting worthy of his divine wisdom, and that therefore we may with the greatest reason presume he will in all succeeding ages continue to give proofs of the sanctity of his holy servants, by making use of things belonging to them in their lifetime, or of their relics after their death, as instruments in his hands

for performing miracles?

XXVII. In the same manner, if we apply this reasoning to the other ends for which miracles are wrought, such as the rewarding the heroic virtues of his servants, the supplying their temporal wants and necessities,especially such as they incur from their adherence to his service, or the punishing sinners in a miraculous manner, either for their own correction, or a warning to others, we shall find our present argument as powerful in these as in all the above examples. We have seen, in our preceding argument, that these ends just now mentioned are most worthy of a divine interposition by miracles; we have seen numbers of glorious instances in the old law, where Almighty God was actually pleased to perform most wonderful miracles to procure them; and hence we inferred that it is reasonable to expect, that at all times, and in al lages under the gospel, he would be ready to act in the same manner, when necessary for the obtaining the like ends. That this was a just inference we are assured from the conduct of Jesus Christ. If he cures the woman of her bloody flux, he declares it a reward of her great confidence in his goodness. If he cures the daughter of the Canaanean woman, he assures her it is in consequence of her faith and perseverance. If the multitudes charmed with his heavenly conversation follow him to the wilderness, and continue there for three days without.

eating or drinking, his bowels are moved with compassion towards them, and in reward of the love and affection they showed him, he once and again miraculously multiplies a few loaves so as to be sufficient to feed some thousands of people. If St. Peter is thrown into prison, and loaded with chains, in order after a few days to be put to death for his ardour and zeal in his service, an angel is sent from heaven to deliver him, the chains fall off his hands, and the iron gate miraculously opens of its own accord, to give him a free passage out of prison, and deliver him from the hands of Herod. If Elymas the magician strives to oppose the progress of the gospel, and to divert the Proconsul Sergius from giving ear to the words of St. Paul, at one word of that apostle the wretch is miraculously struck blind, in punishment of his impious opposition to the work of God. It were endless to bring all the examples of this kind related in the New Testament; these are fully sufficient to show, that the conduct of Jesus Christ under the gospel, confirms the conclusion we drew from what Almighty God did under the law, viz. that the ends above mentioned are esteemed by him most worthy of the greatest miracles; and that as he has actually wrought many splendid miracles for these ends in the apostolic ages, we have the strongest grounds thence to conclude, that he will continue from time to time to do so while the world endureth.

XXVIII. From what has been said upon this second presumptive argument, it will easily appear wherein its force properly consists. In the former argument, we concluded, from the ends for which God wrought miracles in the old law, that these ends were worthy of such divine interposition; and therefore, that we might reasonably presume God would, in all ages under the gospel, continue to work miracles for such ends, when requisite in order to obtain them; for difference of time or place can certainly make no difference either in the value and importance to the ends themselves, as being worthy of miracles, or in the power of God to work

them. Nay, we considered several circumstances of the gospel which show that the necessity of working miracles for such ends, was much greater under the gospel than under the law; and therefore, that we might then with greater reason expect them. In the second argument we go a step further; we consider the conduct of Jesus Christ and his apostles, as related in the New Testament, and we find this conduct precisely such as the conclusion in our former argument led us to expect. We see numbers of miracles wrought for the very same or similar ends, for which Almighty God wrought them in the old law: hence we infer, that our conclusion in the former argument was perfectly just and reasonable, and from this actual conduct of Jesus Christ in the apostolic age, we have still greater reason to presume, that as he began the gospel period by working so many miracles for the above ends, and by instruments similar to those by which he wrought them under the law, so he will continue, in all ages subsequent to that period, to act in the same manner when similar circumstances may require it.

XXIX. I come now to the third presumptive argument for the perpetual continuation of miracles in the church of Christ, which is taken from his own sacred promises. I was at first in some doubt whether I should use these promises only as a presumptive proof, and not rather as a positive evidence; because they are in themselves most ample, unlimited and confirmed with his usual affirmation; and the conditions annexed are such as must be found among Christians to the end of time. Hence we might with the greatest reason conclude, thatthese promises are not mere presumptive arguments, but strong and positive proofs, that the power of mira cles will never be withdrawn from the church while she has a being; for the express promises of God that any thing will be, are as strong a proof beforehand that it will come to pass, as any positive human testimony can afterwards be that it has actually occurred. However as our adversaries, who limit the duration of miracles to their particular assumed periods, are of course obliged to put a limitation to these unlimited promises of our Saviour, I thought it best to give them a place here among the presumptive arguments, because by examining them by the light which the other arguments of this class affords us, we shall see how unjust our adversaries are in putting any restriction or limitation

upon them at all.

XXX. The first of these promises which I shall take notice of, is from our Saviour's last sermon to his apostles the night before his passion, where after exhorting St. Philip to believe in him as God, equal to the Father, and appealing to his works as the testimony given by the Father of this truth, he immediately adds with his usual asseveration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* Now, whether we consider the plain obvious sense of these words as they lie or the intention for which this promise was made, or the reasons upon which the performance of it was grounded, we shall clearly see that it is doing the greatest violence to the sacred text to affix any restriction or limitation to its duration. For, in the first place, there is not the smallest insinuation of any such limitation either in the passage itself, or in the context. He promises by his usual -asseveration that his faithful followers, "he that believeth in me," shall perform miracles equal and even greater than he himself had done. The only condition required is, that the person "believe in him," that is, have that strong faith in him, to which, as we shall afterwards see, the grace of miracles is particularly affixed Now, as it is a truth not to be doubted of, that Almighty God will never want true, holy, and faithful servants in every age to the end of the world, whose souls will be

^{*} John xiv. 12, 13,

adorned with this sacred faith and every other divine virtue; and as there is not the smallest insinuation from the words of this promise itself to attach any limits to its duration where this faith is found; so there is the justest reason to conclude, that the duration of the promise will have no limitation at all. In the second place, the intention with which this promise was made shows this still more fully. Our Saviour is here proving his own divinity, that he himself is God equal to the Father. The argument he appeals to, as the most convincing proof of this truth, is the working of miracles. This he proposes in two different lights;—first he appeals to the works he himself had done: "Believe me," said he, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else (if you will not take it on my word) believe me for the very works' sake."* But as the belief of his divinity was to be the object of our faith in all ages to the end of the world, and as the miracles he wrought himself were seen only by those of his own days, and might be called in question or denied by those of after-ages, -as in fact we find they may have been at all times, and still are denied by many;—therefore he proposes a second proof both of his own divinity and of the reality of the miracles he himself had wrought, namely that he would even confer this very power of working miracles on his faithful followers, who should be enabled to perform in his name the same, and greater works than he himself had done. Now this was a proof altogether beyond exception; for though an impostor might deceive the multitude by false signs and wonders, after the working of Satan, yet it is manifestly impossible that an impostor should be able to confer upon his followers, the power of working greater miracles than he did himself, and foretell with certainty before-hand that he would do so. It is true, the apostles did not then see this promise fulfilled, and therefore this argument would not then have its full influence upon their minds; but

they afterwards found it fully verified in themselves, and also in their disciples, and then it both gave themselves the fullest conviction, and enabled them to give to others also the same conviction of the divinity of their Lord and Master, who had made them this promise beforehand, and afterwards most fully accomplished it in their persons. Now, the intention for which this promise was made shows clearly that it can admit of no limitation as to the time of its duration; for, as this promise of working miracles was made to his faithful followers to be a proof of his divinity, especially where those wrought by himself might be insufficient for this purpose, either for want of being known, or for not being believed; and as these circumstances must often happen in every age even to the end of the world, especially among Heathen nations or Mahometans, when the gospel is first proposed to them; it therefore follows as a necessary consequence, that, in every age when these circumstances concur, this promise will take place, and will undoubtedly be performed according as the divine wisdom shall see most suitable to the end intended. Lastly, if we consider the reasons upon which the performance of this promise is grounded, we shall see the same conclusion still more and more confirmed. He gives two reasons; first, because he was soon to leave this world and return to the Father: "Greater works than these," says he, "shall he do, because I go to the Father."* Now what connection has this reason with the promise? The connection is evident and natural: "Hitherto, whilst I was visibly present upon the earth," he says in substance, "I have wrought such miracles as I knew were fully sufficient for convincing you, my faithful followers, of all I have taught you: I have also instructed you, comforted you, and assisted you in all your needs; but I am going to leave you and return to the Father; and after I am gone, you will be exposed to innumerable trials, persecutions, and afflictions of al.

kinds, from the rage of hell and the malice of the world; but the midst of these trials, 'I will not leave you comfortless,'* 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the spirit of truth,'† and, this comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, he shall teach you all things.'t 'And when they bring you into synagogues, and magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.'§ 'And I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.' And lastly, for your further comfort and support under all your afflictions, and to enable you to overcome all your adversaries, and convince them that your doctrine is from me, and that I am the true God equal to the Father, and that when I leave this world, I go to the Father, and have in all things the same power with him, I will bestow upon my faithful followers the power of working miracles, even greater than those I have done myself; "he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater than these shall he do, because I go to the Father." It is plain, that all these promises here related, and which, for the most part, are contained in this very last sermon before the passion and given at the same time, -were intended for the support, encouragement, and comfort of the apostles and their successors in the work of the ministry, and of all faithful Christians who must suffer persecution if they want to live piously in Christ Jesus, under their trials, of whatever kind, and, at the same time, as proofs of the divinity and doctrine of Jesus. Now, it is to be observed, that the former of these promises, to wit, the coming of the Holy Ghost, his help and assistance in teaching them all things, and suggesting to them what to say when called before civil powers, were immediately addressed to the persons of

[•] Ver. 18. † Ver. 16. ‡ Ver. 26 § Luke xii. 2. || Luke xxi. 15.

the apostles; yet nobody doubts but these promises would continue to be fulfilled to the end of the world whenever the circumstances should require it; nay, it is expressly declared, that the Holy Ghost will abide with his church for ever for these very purposes. But this last promise of the power of working miracles was not addressed to the apostles immediately in their own persons, but to all true believers, "he that believeth on me;" consequently, if the former promises, though addressed immediately to the apostles, are yet justly understood as admitting no limitation, and if the Holy Ghost, abiding with his church for ever, will never fail to fulfil them as need requires, in the absence of our Saviour; much more ought this last promise to be understood in the same unlimited sense, being addressed to all the faithful in whatever age. With greater reason, therefore, must we believe that the Holy Ghost, to whose grace and operation the gift of miracles is chiefly attributed, abiding for ever with his church, will never fail to fulfil this last promise also, when the support of the faithful, the propagation of the gospel, or any other of those glorious ends which Almighty God judges worthy of such conduct, shall require his doing so. The second reason on which the performance of the above promise is founded, is given by our Saviour in these words: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* The design of this promise was, that it might be a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ; the fulfilment of it served mightily for this purpose, as we have seen; but the manner of performing it tends still more to show it: "Whatsoever," says he, "you shall ask in my name, that will I do," when any of you, my faithful followers, would perform a miracle, you must do it in my name, you must ask the Father, in my name, to grant it; and I here pass my sacred word, that whatever you ask in this manner, in my name, and with a full faith, I will

undoubtedly perform it. We have seen above, in the rules of the criterion, that a miracle is truly such and the work of God, when it is done in his name. Here then Jesus Christ promises, without any limitation, to afford this proof of his divinity when his faithful servants in suitable circumstances shall demand it of him, with a view, as he adds, "that the Father may be glorified by the Son." Now, as this reason and these circumstances will, without doubt, occur in every age to the end of the world, especially in the conversion of infidel nations, therefore we justly conclude, that this promise admits of no limitation of time, but will be performed in every age, where it may be required for the convincing mankind of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the glorifying

the Father by the Son.

XXXI. We have seen in the two preceding arguments of presumptive evidence, that it is worthy of Almighty God, and highly becoming his divine wisdom, to perform miracles in any age, when any of the above ends shall require it; we have seen that some or other of these ends will never be wanting while the world endures; we have seen that Jesus Christ has actually wrought numbers of miracles by himself, and by his followers, for many of these ends during the first age of Christianity; and from all these grounds we conclude that we have the most just and well grounded reason to expect, that the miraculous powers will continue in the church to the end of time. If to these presumptive arguments we add the above solemn promise of Jesus Christ, and the reasons we have given to prove that it can admit of no limitation, I appeal to common sense whether or not this does not afford us, I do not say a presumptive evidence, but even a most positive assurance, that the power of miracles will never be withdrawn from the church of Christ while the world endureth.

XXXII. It is further to be observed, that as the above promise gives the strongest confirmation to the presumptive evidence of the two preceding arguments, so their evidence is another convincing proof that the said pro-

mise ought most certainly to be understood in the unlimited sense in which I have explained it. By the above presumptive arguments we have the strongest reason to expect, that Almighty God will, from time to time, work miracles in his church to the end of the world. Jesus Christ makes a solemn promise to his faithful followers,—to bestow upon them the power of working even greater miracles than he himself had done; he makes it in general terms; he puts no limitation to it either of time or place: the question is, How long is this promise to last? If, as we have seen above, there be the highest presumptive evidence to expect that miracles will be wrought in every age to the end of the world, this plainly shows, that the promise of Christ, to which he has tacked no limitation himself, is most certainly to be understood without any limitation, as we have also proved above, and these arguments amount to an unanswerable proof that the power of working miracles will continue to be exerted in the church from time to time to the end of the world.

XXXIII. The next promise made by our blessed Saviour on this subject, is mentioned in the last chapters of St. Matthew and St. Mark, when, before his ascension, he gave his apostles their commission to publish his gospel throughout all nations: In St. Matthew it is thus related: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world."* In St. Mark several other circumstances not taken notice of by St. Matthew are added, as follows: "And he said untothem, Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be lamn-

^{*} Matth. xxviii.

ed; and these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God, and they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."* On these two passages, which together contain a full account of the several particulars that happened on this occasion we are to observe, 1. That our Saviour begins by assuring us, that 'all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth,' and thereby takes away all doubt of his performing whatever he promises. 2. He gives the apostles commission to teach all nations those sacred truths which he had revealed to them, and absolutely requires that all nations should receive and believe these truths under pain of damnation. 3. To take away all grounds for complaining, that he had not given mankind sufficient proof that these truths were really from him, he solemnly promises the gift of miracles to his faithful followers, as the most undoubted proof that what they taught were the truths of God; so that whosoever shall refuse to believe after such a proof should be altogether inexcusable. 4. He promises to be always with his apostles in this great work to the end of the world, thereby showing that this commission and these promises were not confined to the persons of the apostles who were soon to leave the world, but were made to them and their successors to the end of time. 5. We are assured, that immediately upon the apostles beginning to execute their commission in preaching the word, the Lord began to accomplish his promise, confirming their words with signs following; thereby assuring us, that he will undoubtedly perform it in its full extent as well as the beginning. 6. It is also here to be observ-

ed, that though the commission of teaching was directly given to the apostles, yet the promise of miracles was annexed to those that believe. The plain and natural consequence of all these observations is, that as miracles are here promised to true believers, without any restriction of time or place, as a proof of the truth of the gospel when taught to the nations, and as Christ's presence for assisting the pastors of his church in this great work is expressly promised to the end of the world, and finally, as this great work will not be fully accomplished till towards the end of the world; therefore this promise of miracles will continue to be fulfilled, from time to time, till that period, as often as the end for which it is here made shall require it. If now we join to this what we have said above upon the former promise from John xiv., and what we have seen in the two first arguments of presumptive evidence, I would appeal to our adversaries themselves, whether it be not a manifest wresting of the sacred texts, and the highest presumption to pretend to limit these divine promises to any age or period whatsoever. And if so, then miracles will continue to be performed in the church of Christ from time to time, as long as the world endureth.

XXXIV. The last promises I shall take notice of on this subject, are those made on different occasions to those of a strong faith, as related in the different gospels. When the disciples saw the fig-tree presently wither away upon their master's commanding it, "they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away? Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also, if you shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."* Again, when the disciples could not cure the lunatic child, and asked their master the reason,

^{*} Matt. xxi. 21.

'Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you."* Lastly, when the apostles begged their master to increase their faith, he said, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea, and it should obey thee."+ On these texts I shall only observe, that in them we find the working of the most stupendous miracles affixed to a strong faith and confidence in God, without the least insinuation of any kind of restriction or limitation, either as to time or place. As, therefore, there is not the smallest reason to imagine, that such faith may not be found in some holy servant of God in all ages of the church to the end of the world; so of course we may from these texts conclude, that the miraculous powers will never be withdrawn from the church in any age whatever. This inference joined to all we have seen above, gives a new lustre and an additional strength to our conclusion.

XXXV. I come now to the last source of presumptive evidence for the perpetual continuation of miracles, taken from what we know will happen at the end of the world. We are assured in the book of Revelations, that during the dreadful times of Anti-christ, the two witnesses will appear to oppose him clothed with the most ample power of miracles, which is thus described: "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouths and devoureth their enemies—These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy, and have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will." Here then we are assured, that miracles most amazing and in great numbers, will most certainly be performed by these defenders, of the cause

of God in the last age of the church. It is confessed by all, that they were performed in great abundance in the first and some following ages. There is not the smallest insinuation in the whole scripture, that the power of performing them should, after any period of time, be taken away from the church, and at the end be restored. to her again; therefore we may justly conclude, that no such interruption ever was, or ever will be made; and, on the contrary, with great reason we presume, that as these powers most certainly were in the church at the beginning, and undoubtedly will be at the end, so they will never be taken from her in any intervening age, but continue to be exerted in every age, whenever the promotion of the divine glory by any of the ends above mentioned, shall require it. Join this presumptive argument with all the former, and let common sense decide of their combined strength and efficacy.

XXXVI. I shall now sum up all I have advanced on this head of presumptive evidence for the continuation of miracles in all ages, in the manner Mr. Brook has done for those of the three first centuries, and as near as

I can in his own words.

Thus it will appear, I think, from the history of these extraordinary and divine powers with which the caints of God were endued in every age during the old law; from the ends for which these powers were given them; from the conduct of Jesus Christ during the first age of the gospel, and from the several unlimited promises of bestowing these powers upon his faithful followers, that there is a strong, yea, the strongest presumption of the continuance of miracles in the true church of Christ till the end of the world. This presumption is much heightened by considering, that all and every one of. those ends for which Almighty God wrought such numbers of Miracles during the old law, and for which great numbers were also wrought by Christ and his apostles in the first age of the gospel, must necessarily occur on numberless occasions in every succeeding age, and very frequently in such circumstances as render the aid of

miracles for obtaining them much more necessary than it was in those former times in which he actually wrought such numbers of miracles on their account.

XXXVII. Doctor Middleton, and every other man who professeth himself a Christian, must allow, that miracles were wrought in great abundance, not only at the first establishment of the Mosaic institution, but on many different occasions, in every period during its exis tence: they must allow that miracles were wrought in great abundance during the lives of the apostles, and that the Christian religion was first propagated by an extraordinary providence: Mr. Brook will also allow, and has solidly proved, that the same extraordinary providence continued, and miracles were wrought in no less abundance during the first three ages of Christianity: other Protestant authors, with equal reason, have ascertained the continuance of miracles in the church of Christ for several ages more. The question then will be, Whether we have reason to conclude, that the same extraordinary providence has continued ever since, and will continue to the end of the world ! If the probability of an event is to be determined by the likelihood of its happening, and if that thing is allowed to be likely to happen, which has frequently, and in a variety of instances, already come to pass, then it may reasonably be presumed, that if there were such frequent interpositions of the Deity for the several ends above specified, in every age during the law, and for several ages at the beginning of the gospel, it is likely, that in all succeeding ages the same extraordinary interpositions should from time to time be continued in similar cases, and where the same important ends present themselves and if to this be added, the several promises of Christ, of bestowing the gift of miracles on his faithful followers, the reasons of these promises, the ends proposed, and the unlimited terms in which they are conceived: and lastly, what we know for certain will happen at the end of the church in this world, I dare say every man of common sense who understands these reasons, will

readily agree, that they amount not only to the greatest probability, but even to a very high degree of certainty, that the power of working miracles will never be taken from the church of Christ, but continue to be exerted, on suitable occasions, by the holy servants of God, in every age to the end of the world; and therefore, that, if any particular miracle in any age be properly attested, it is most worthy of credit, and it would be manifest folly and obstinacy to call it in question. The nature of this attestation I now proceed to consider.

CHAPTER XV.

Positive Evidence for the Continuation of Miracles throughout all preceding Ages, down to the present times.

I. THE result of all we have said upon the criterion and continuation of miracles, is, that the evidence of testimony is the only natural and proper proof for the existence of miracles to those who were not eye-witnesses of them:—That no metaphysical arguments, a priori, can, in the smallest degree, weaken the force of this evidence, when the testimony is such as it ought to be :- That we have the highest presumptive evidence that the miraculous powers will be continued with the church of Christ throughout all ages to the end of the world:-That there is not the smallest weight in any of those arguments which are brought against this continuation; and, as a necessary consequence of these truths. that, if the positive testimony for the actual existence of miracles in every age of the church down to this present time be unexceptionable, it must be the height of folly to call their existence in question.

II. Before we proceed to examine the nature of this testimony, it will be proper to take notice of a piece of very unfair dealing in some of the adversaries of the Catholic church, on this subject. We distinguish three different classes of miracles with respect to the testimony on which they are founded:—First, those which have no other ground but popular rumours, or mere oral tradition, without any other proof of their existence from history, authentic testimony, ancient monuments or the like.—Now, on miracles of this class no stress is laid; for though the mere want of proper evidence is by no means an absolute proof that such miracles never did exist, yet it is a just reason for not appealing to them as proofs of the point in question, which accordingly is never done. But while they have a good moral tendency, and serve to illustrate any point of religion, or enforce any practical duty, they are properly used for this purpose, by way of parables, after the example of our blessed Saviour himself in the gospel. And, indeed, experience teaches those who have some experience in the care of souls, how much a well-timed example or parable of this kind serves to influence the minds of the unlearned, and render the great truths of religion sensible and affecting to those who would have heard the strongest reasons and the warmest exhortations without the least emotion, or even comprehending what was said. Neither can this use of such parables be objected to with any colour of reason, since besides the example of Jesus Christ who authorizes it, we see, that nothing is more common, even among those who cry out against them, than to propose moral duties for the instruction of others, by relations professedly false, -by fables, novels, romances, and the like; whereas the examples and parables we speak of, though not attested by positive proof, yet may have been true and real, as many of them undoubtedly are. It is well known, that numbers of extraordinary favours done to the saints of God, are studiously concealed by them out of humility, and though afterwards discovered and published by word of.

mouth, yet are not always properly attested, so as to be an evidence to posterity; and many things, too, have been fully attested when they happened, though the testimony has, by length of time, been lost, whilst the memory of the fact once published has been preserved by oral tradition to after ages.—But whatever may be said as to this, the fact is, that miracles of this class are entirely laid aside, when the question is to prove the continuation or existence of miracles in the church, and those of the two following classes only are regarded.

The second class contains those miracles which are properly attested by judicious historians, or other writers of credit and authority, who either were themselves eye-witnesses of what they relate, or had every means to know the truth, and published their works to the world in such circumstances as render their testimony above

all suspicion.

The third class contains those miracles which have undergone the rigorous examination of the church in her processes for the canonization of saints and have been authentically published to the world after such examin-

ation, as true and incontestable miracles.

III. Now, right reason and common justice would require, that when the adversaries of the Catholic church attempt to confute or ridicule her miracles, by examining any particular miracle approved by her, they should always make choice of some instance belonging either to the second or third class. Yet this piece of justice they do not always allow her; nay, we find, that two of her avowed modern adversaries, Mr. Hume, in his Essay on Miracles, and Dr. Campbell, in his Dissertation against that Essay, have not so much as attempted to examine any one particular miracle authentically approved in the church, belonging either to the second or third class, but have only appealed to, and ridiculed a mere popular hearsay, and a set of forged miracles, the forgery and falsity of which were detected and exposed by her own pastors. The reason of this conduct will pasily appear, when we consider the firm and insurmountable force which the miracles of the second and third class have, and the solid grounds on which they stand, from the nature of their respective testimony,

which I now proceed to consider.

IV. In examining miracles of the second class, viz. those which are properly attested by judicious historians of credit and authority, I do not intend to make an induction of examples throughout the different ages of the church, and point out in each the strength of the testimony on which we receive them.—This would extend my argument to an enormous length. Nor is it necessary, as it has been ably done already, by the learned author of that masterly performance, The Miraculous Powers of the Church, &c. I shall therefore confine myself to a general view of the nature and circumstances of that testimony, which will fully answer my purpose, and which I chiefly take from the judicious

observations of that pious author.

V. First, then, if we consider the characters of the persons who attest the existence of miracles in their own days, throughout every age, we shall find them above all exception, viz the holy fathers, and chief pastors of the church,-men raised up by Almighty God from time to time, as the great luminaries of the Christian world, replenished with a superabundant measure of the divine spirit, and whose lives were spent in the most perfect exercise of all Christian virtues.—The many excellent and justly admired writings which they have left behind them, and which remain to this day are the most unexceptionable proofs of their exquisite sense, their deep penetration, the acuteness of their judgment, and their extensive learning. The place many of them held in the church gave them full power and opportunity to search into the truth of what they related, and their duty required of them to use every precaution to hinder their flock from being imposed upon by cheats and impostors. We cannot, therefore, doubt either their ability to investigate the truth, or their dilig noe in doing it much less can we suspect

that they would wilfully deceive by imposing apon the world any thing as true which they knew to be false.— They were Christians, -perfect Christians, who made it their whole study to live up to the perfection of Christian virtue: They well knew it was absolutely unlawful to deviate from the truth for any cause whatever. - They preached up this doctrine to their people;—they have left it on record in their writings; and whenever occasion offered, they always protested their constant attachment to the truth in whatever they related .- Thus St. Justin Martyr declares, he would rather lose his life than save it by a lie; St. Sulpicius Severus, in his life of St. Martin, does the same :- "I entreat those who shall read it (says he,) that they would believe what I say, and be persuaded that I have written nothing but what is well attested, and assured; for I had rather besilent than tell an untruth." St. Augustine also, who relates many most remarkable miracles as within his own knowledge, and of which he was an eye-witness, shows his utter abhorrence of all lies in many different parts of his writings, particularly in his book to Consentius concerning lies, where he says, "All lies, without exception, are to be excluded from the doctrine of religion, and even from every proposition uttered concerning that doctrine in the teaching and learning of it. And let it not be imagined that there can possibly be any reason found for telling a lie in such matters: Since it is not justifiable to tell a lie about religious doctrines, even for the sake of converting a person more easily by them: For if the sense of truth be once broken down, or even but lightly weakened, every thing will be rendered uncertain." The same doctrine is constantly held and professed by the whole series of those saints in all ages.—Their cause was the cause of truth; they believed themselves, and laboured to convince all others, that to deviate from the known truth, or to propagate a known falsehood, is a crime for which we must account

to Almighty God, by whom it will be severely punished. It is ridiculous then to suppose that they were capable of attesting and publishing to the world as a certain truth what they were conscious was a falsehood. Witnesses of this character are, therefore, above all exception, especially when we consider that they are in great numbers in different countries, and in all ages, who give their testimony to facts that happened in their own times. 'Such a general attestation of matters of fact,' says Mr. Brook, speaking of this testimony in the three first ages, but which is perfectly applicable to every succeeding age, 'Such a general attestation of matters of fact, which are in themselves unexceptionable, is ever thought authentic and substantial. Nothing, indeed, but the force of truth itself, and the reality of the things themselves thus related, is able to create so unanimous, so universal a consent.'*

VI. But the force of this universal testimony of such unexceptionable witnesses is vastly increased in every age, when we consider, secondly, the manner in which they give this testimony and the circumstances attending it. Under this head there are several things most worthy our attention; for, 1. They do not mention the miracles they speak of, as popular reports, or idle hearsays; they attest them as facts perfectly consistent with their own knowledge, of which they either were themselves eye-witnesses, or had them from such as were: Thus Origen, in his first book against Celsus, declares that the Christians in his days "drive away devils, perform many cures, foresee things to come, according to the will of the divine word." And a little after he adds: "I have seen many examples of this sort, and should I only set down such of them as were transacted in my presence, I should expose myself to the loud laughter of the unbelievers who imagine that we, like the rest whom they suspect of forging such things, are also imposing our forgeries upon them :- But God is my witness, that

^{*} Brook's Exam. p. 145.

my sole purpose is to recommend the religion of Jesus, not by fictitious tales, but by clear and evident facts."
In like manner, the great St. Athanasius in his preface to the life of St. Antony, wherein he relates many extraordinary and miraculous effects of the divine power, declares himself thus: "The facts which I have inserted are partly from my own knowledge,-for I often went to see him, -and partly from the information of one who had long attended on him; in all which I have carefully adhered to truth." And in the course of the history itself, he relates several of these miracles done by the Saint in his own presence. So also St. Paulinus relates miracles performed by St. Ambrose before his own eyes; and the famous miracles wrought in Milan by the relics of the holy martyrs Sts. Gervasius and Protacius, are related both by St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, as facts of which they themselves were eye-witnesses, as well as thousands of others.* St. Chrysostom, speaking of the sign of the cross, says: "This sign, both in the days of our fathers and in our own, has thrown open gates that were shut, destroyed the effects of poisonous drugs, dissolved the force of hemlock, and cured the bites of venemous beasts."† St. Paulinus has celebrated, both in prose and verse, many miracles performed by the relics of St. Felix the martyr; and, he declares that many of them were actually performed, in his own presence. St. Augustine, in his excellent work on the City of God, relates a great many most extraordinary miracles, done in his own time, and before his own eyes, at which, says he, "nos interfuimus et oculis aspeximus nostris:"-I myself was present, and beheld with my own eyes;" and coming to the famous cure of two persons at the shrine of St. Stephen, he gives a most circumstantial account of it as having been performed before the whole people. He says, "It is so notorious and so celebrated, that I do not think there is one of all the

^{*} See St. Ambr. Ep. 2. ad Sorotem Marcellin. et St. Aug. Confes. 4. 9, c. 7.

† T. 7. p. 552.

‡ Poem 23.

inhabitants of Hippo who did not see it, or hath not been informed of it; nor one that can ever forget it." Theoderet, bishop of Cyr, declares that he was himself eye-witness to several miracles wrought by the holy monks of his time. He was intimately acquainted with many of them, and has transmitted to posterity a circumstantial account of the wonderful works which God performed by their means. Speaking of St. Simeon Stylites, "I myself," says he, "saw another most cele-trated miracle," which he goes on to relate in the cure of a sick man; and adds, "I was not only a spectator of his miracles, I was also a hearer of his predictions;" several instances of which, and their full accomplishment, he describes. Eneas of Gaza, in his dialogue between Theoprastus and Aritheus, speaking of the African confessors, whose tongues had been cut out at the roots by the Arians, but who miraculously retained the perfect faculty of their speech, says, "I myself saw these men, and heard them talk, and was astonished they could speak so articulately; I looked for the organ of speech, and, not trusting my ears, I examined the matter with my eyes, and having opened their mouths, saw that their tongues were entirely cut away, root and all. Upon which I was amazed, not only that they could speak, but even that they had not expired in the execution." Procopius also attests that he had seen them at Constantinople. The same language we find in every age by those who attest these matters; but as it would run out to too great a length to collect all, I shall conclude with Geoffroy, one of St. Bernard's disciples, who writes his life, and declares, "I was present at almost - all the transactions I relate; some few things, to which I was not an eye-witness have been attested to me by brethren, on whose veracity I can depend." But, 2. What makes this declaration still more worthy of credit is, that they often call God himself to witness the truth of what they attest; this we have seen above was done by Origen. So also Palladius, in his history of the Fathers of the desert relates numbers of miracles performed by

these great Saints, not only from the report of credible witnesses, but from his own certain knowledge, declaring that he had seen these wonderful works himself, and assures us that, by the grace of God, he tells the truth. St. Sulpicius Severus was a learned and holy priest, who wrote the life of that great prelate St. Martin of Tours, in which numbers of great miracles wrought by the Saint are related, and in the beginning of it he says: "I intreat those who shall read it, that they would believe what I say, and be persuaded that I have written nothing but what is well attested and assured; for I had rather be silent than tell an untruth;" and in the fifth chapter he declares that he would esteem it a crime to tell a lie in favour of St. Martin, and calls Christ to witness that he has related nothing but what he had either seen himself or received from known witnesses, and for the most part from St. Martin himself. The sixth book of the life of St. Bernard, written by his disciple Geoffroy, is an attested narrative of a number of miracles wrought by the Saint in different places. supported by unexceptionable witnesses, the bishop of Constance, his Chaplain, two abbots, two monks, and three clergymen, who accompanied the Saint, and day by day attested and set their names, to what they were eve-witnesses of, and in their attestation they express themselves thus: "We that were present have judged it necessary to specify the miracles as well to avoid confusion as to avoid all doubt: we have each of us signed our names, and do solemnly attest what we have seen and heard." To mention one instance more: In the fourteenth century lived St. Catherine of Sienna, remarkable for the many miracles God wrought by her means. Her confessor F. Raymond, general of the order of the Dominicans, wrote her life, with which he was well acquainted, and candidly acknowledges that for a long time he doubted of the reality of those heavenly things he saw in her; till having maturely examined them, and experienced in himself the wonderful efficacy of her prayers, he was fully satisfied, and therefore Vol. II.-16*

in the presence of God avers the truth of what he relates. What confirms still more the veracity of this their testimony is, 3. That they often appeal to their very enemies themselves for the truth of what they attest, as a thing notorious and perfectly consistent with their knowledge: Thus S. Justin Martyr, in his second apology to the Roman Senate, says, 'This you may understand by what happens before your own eyes: For many persons possessed with devils, through the whole world, and in this very city, have been delivered, and are even now delivered by several of our Christians adjuring them in the name of Jesus Christ.' So also Tertullian challenges the Heathen magistrates 'to call before their tribunals any person manifestly possessed with a devil; and if the evil spirit, when exorcised by any Christian whatsoever, did not own himself to be a devil, as truly as in other places he would falsely call himself a God—not daring to tella lie to a Christian that then they should take the life of that Christian. And what is more manifest,' says he, 'than this work ? what more convincing than this proof?'* S. Jerom also writing against Vigilantius, who denied that any veneration was due to the relics of the martyrs, appeals to the very miracles done by these relics, as evident and manifest proofs against that heretic: 'Answer me,' says he, 'how comes it to pass that in this vile dust and ashes, as you call them, of the martyrs, there is so great a manifestation of signs and miracles?' Again, 4. In several cases this testimony for the existence of miracles, and the miracles themselves, have been examined, and all opposition made against them at the very time they happened by the adversaries of the Catholic faith, but which had no other effect than to establish them the more firmly: Thus the famous miracles at Milan wrought by the relics of the two holy martyrs, Sts. Gervasius and Protasius, had such influence on the minds of the people as greatly to alarm the Arians; for

which reason no stone was left unturned to discredit them as impostures, as well by the lies and misrepresentations of those heretics, as by the interest of the court, then residing in that city: But all to no purpose; the people knew, what they had seen with their own eyes; the notoriety of what was done prevailed over all these contrivances; and in spite of all the rage of the Empress and her party, gave a check to the persecution against the Catholics.*

In like manner, in the Arian persecution in Africa, under Hunnerick, king of the Vandals, we have the celebrated miracle of restoring sight to a blind man, before the whole people, by Eugenius, bishop of Carthage, which is related at large by St. Victor, bishop of Vita, in his history of this persecution. This made so great a noise, 'that the news (says St. Victor) was soon carried to Hunnerick; the man was apprehended, and questioned. about all that had happened, and the recovery of his sight. He gave a faithful account of every circumstance: Whereby the Arian bishops were put to the utmost con-The reality of the miracle could not be denied, for Felix (the blind man) was known to the whole city. Again, 5. The time and manner in which this their testimony was published to the world, is another convincing proof of their veracity in giving it; for they do not publish their accounts of the miracles they relate, as of things that happened long ago, or in different parts of the world, but as facts performed at the very time, and in the very place where they mention them, and as well known to the very people to whom they publish them. Several examples of this we see in those brought above; as of St. Augustine in his City of God,* where, he says, 'even at this time miracles are wrought in the name of Jesus, as well by his sacrements as by the prayers and memorials of his saints. The cure of the blind man at Milan, was done in the presence of a vast concourse of people who were there assembled at the

[•] See St. Ambr. Ep. 2. ad Marcellinam.

bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius.' A little after, he adds, 'There was one miracle wrought among us, so notorious and so celebrated, that I do not think there is one of all the inhabitants of Hippo who did not see it, or hath not been informed of it;' and then goes on to relate it. Now this relation he published in Hippo to that very people before whom he avers the miracle was performed: Must be not have been a madman to have done this, if what he related had never existed? In like manner, Theodoret published the life and wonderful miracles of St. Simeon Stylites, while the Saint was living, and thousands were alive who had been eyewitnesses of what he related, so that it is impossible he could have escaped detection, if what he related had not been literally true. When St. Victor, bishop of Vita, published to the world his history of the African confessors, whose tongues had been cut out by Hunnerick, and who yet retained the perfect use of their speech, he says, 'If any man makes a difficulty in believing this, let him go to Constantinople, and there he may see one of them, Reparatus by name, a sub-deacon, who speaks perfectly, and is highly esteemed by all in the palace of the emperor Zeno.' Must not this author have been more than mad, or could he ever have escaped being detected for an impostor had this relation been a fiction? Lastly, The life of St. Bernard was wrote by one of his own disciples, and published soon after his death, while thousands of people were living, who, if there had been any forgery in the miracles there related, must have had it in their power to detect the fraud, to the utter confusion of the publishers. I cannot help adding here, 6. two examples akin to the last mentioned, to wit, of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and of St. Gregory the Great: The former, in his homily preached to his people on the paralytic, declares publicly, as a thing well known among them, that the gifts of prophecy, of healing the sick, and of casting out devils, were granted at that time to some of the faithful at Jerusalem; and he there publicly exhorts those, on which these graces were bestowed, to be humble, and to repress all thoughts of pride and vanity that might arise in their breasts on their account: Now how ridiculous would all this be if his hearers had not perfectly well known the truth of what ne thus asserted? In like manner, St. Grogory the Great writes to St. Augustine, apostle of the English, exhorting him to be humble, and not to let his mind be elated by the many miracles God was pleased to work by his hands for the conversion of that people, which would have been highly inconsistent, and exposing himself to the just censure of the world, if these miracles had never existed. To these I may also add St. Chrysostom, though more properly belonging to the former class, who, in his discourse* mentions it to his hearers as a thing well known and notorious among them, that many had been healed of their distempers by anointing themselves with oil taken from the lamps that were kept burning before the relics of the martyrs. Now, from all these considerations it is evident beyond dispute that the manner in which this testimony is given, and the circumstances attending it, are such as take away every suspicion of imposture, and give the highest lustre and energy to the attestation so delivered.

VII. The nature of the miraculous facts attested is, thirdly, another great proof of the truth of the testimony given to their existence; for these were by no means dubious, hidden or abstruse matters, that could be fit subjects for juggling tricks, and easily imposed on the people, as our adversaries insinuate, but palpable, plain, open facts, of which the most illiterate person who could see or hear was a perfectly competent judge; namely, giving sight to the blind, dispossessing devils, curing the sick, raising the dead to life, and such like. There is no need of being a learned philosopher to prevent our being deceived in the exhibition of such things before us; the simplest clown is as capable to discern the truth in such cases as those of the greatest learning.

VIII: Fourthly, The effects produced by these miracles is another glorious proof of their reality, and that the attestation given of them is true. These effects are chiefly three, 1. The conversion of heretics. Thus the great numbers of Arians converted by the miracles which were wronght by the relics of the martyrs of Milan, and the multitude of Henricians about Thoulouse and other places, converted by the miracles of St. Bernard, are most undeniable proofs of the reality of those miracles by which this was brought about. And this proof is the more cogent, because it is well known how obstinate and inveterate these heresies were, and how attentive their abettors to lay hold of every thing against the Catholic church. Hence we may fairly conclude, that had not these miracles been true, and even notorious beyond all dispute, instead of converting such numbers of those poor souls, they could never have escaped the censure of such clear sighted adversaries, but would have rather confirmed them in their errors. They would have been turned by them into an occasion of ridicule, and served only to the confusion of those who pretended to prove the Catholic doctrine by them. The same is to be said of the miracles of St. Dominic, which were instrumental in converting numbers of the Albigenses, and of several others too tedious to mention. 2. The conversion of sinners to a holy life of penance and piety, is another admirable effect miracles have produced and a most undoubted proof of the reality of their exis-Every one knows how difficult a matter it is to change the heart of obstinate sinners, habituated to vice and sensuality; nothing less than the Almighty hand of God is able to perform this, especially to do it thoroughly and instantaneously. Miracles are doubtless the most powerful and best adapted external means to convince such sinners of what God requires from them, and of their imminent danger if they continued rebellious to his will; and God himself, in Pharaoh and other such examples we read of in holy scripture, used them for this very purpose. When therefore, such conversions,

instantaneous and perfect, are notoriously known as the consequences of miracles attested to have been wrought for that very purpose, this effect produced by them is a most convincing proof of the real existence of the cause which produced it. A most remarkable instance of this we have in the life of St. Bernard, in the conversion of the duke of Guienne, by the miracles of that holy servant of God, which, with others of the like nature, I omit relating, for brevity's sake. 3. The conversion of Heathen nations to the Christian faith is another glorious effect of miracles, and an incontestable proof of their existence. That Heathen nations have in all ages been converted to the faith of Christ, is a fact never called in question: That miracles were proper, adequate, and well adapted means to produce this effect, will not be denied: That we might reasonably expect them from a good God on such an important occasion, is what the most violent adversaries must admit. Seeing then, that the histories of all these converted nations do solemnly attest, that many miracles were wrought by those holy saints who converted them, and their conversion-itself a notorious fact—is expressly declared to have been the effect of these miracles; the certainty and notoriety of the effect gives the most convincing proof of the existence of the cause from which it proceeded, and adds an insuperable strength to the testimony by which that existence is attested. And here we may very fitly subjoin the observation of St. Augustine, that, considering the nature of the Christian religion both as regards faith and morals,—the opposition it must needs meet with on both these accounts from the corruption of our hearts and our perverse inclinations, especially when these have been confirmed by habit and continual indulgence, as is the case in all Heathen nations before their conversion,—the popular prejudices,—and numberless difficulties it has every where to struggle with when it makes its first appearance in any country; -- considering, I say, all these things, it seems impossible it should ever gain ground and be planted in any nation, without

the help of miracles. But if, at any time, this should happen, it would be a greater miracle than any of those which are related upon any such occasion; because the conversion of any Heathen nation to the faith of Christ without the help of miracles, would be a most supernatural effect produced in the hearts of every one converted, by the immediate operation of the power of God, without the use of any external means adequate to the effect produced. What Dr. Campbell beautifully observes of the miracles of the apostles, and the effects procuced by them in the conversion of the Heathen world, may justly be used here, and is entirely applicable to the same or similar effects in converting Heathens, heretics, or sinners, in all after-ages. . " The very pretext of supporting the doctrine by miracles," says the Doctor, "if a false pretext, would of necessity do unspeakable hurt to the cause. The pretence of miracles will quickly attract the attention of all to whom the new (or the disputed) doctrine is published. The influence which address and eloquence, appearances of sanctity, and fervours of devotion would otherwise have had. however great, would be superseded by the consideration of what is infinitely more striking and decisive. The miracles, therefore, will first be canvassed, and canvassed with a temper of mind the most unfavourable to conviction."* Consequently, if, after such canvassing, the adversaries yield assent to the evidences of divine truth, so that Heathens become Christians, heretics rejoin the Catholic faith, detesting their former errors, and sinners are converted to a penitential and virtuous life; these effects are plainly the most convincing proofs that the miracles had stood the test of the strictest scrutiny, and triumphed over all opposition.

IX. To these more remarkable effects produced by miracles, which serve as so many convincing proofs of their existence, and of the truth of that testimony by which their existence is supported, we may also subjoin

two others, which, if not properly effects directly produced by miracles, are such natural consequences of them as necessarily presuppose the reality of their existence. The first is the erection of public monuments in memory of the miracles performed. When any public monument actually exists, and when ancient historians living on the spot at the very time of its erection, give an account of the fact which gave occasion to it, these two together are an irrefragable proof of the existence of that fact; because, should the historian give a false account, and publish it at the time and place in which the monument is erected, he must either be a fool or a madman, and it is evidently impossible he should escape detection. Now, many such public monuments are to be found in the Catholic church, as proofs of the reality of those miracles for which they were erected. The second is the pitiful shifts that the adversaries of the Catholic faith have been reduced to, in order to evade the force of these miracles which have been urged against them, particularly their attributing them to imposture or to art magic; for such evasions as these plainly show, that even those very adversaries were convinced of the reality of the facts, which, being public and notorious, they had not confidence to deny or call in question; and therefore found themselves reduced to the necessity of having recourse to the above evasions. with a view to elude the force of these miracles against them and their false doctrines. And it is observable, that this is a common subterfuge of the adversaries of the Catholic faith. Thus, Osiander, one of the celebrated fathers of the reformation, not being able to doubt of the miracles performed by St. Bernard, says, they "were Satan's workmanship—for the confirmation of idolatry and false worship."* Whittaker, in his answer to Bellarmine, acknowledging the existence of those miracles urged against him by that learned cardinal, attri-butes them to the devil. "The devil," says he, "might

^{*} Epit. Centur p. 310. Vol. II.—17

preserve the body of Xavier for a short time odoriferous and incorrupt."* So Calvin, in the preface to his Institutions, and the centuriators of Magdeburgh, relating miracles in every century of the church, being convinced of the facts, openly impute them to Satan. In like manner the Arians and Heathens, as St. Ambrose informs us, pretended that the miracles performed by the bodies of St. Gervase and St. Protase were wrought by the devil, on purpose to delude the Christians, Celsus also. and Julian, these two inveterate pagan adversaries of Christianity, attributed all the miracles wrought at the establishment of the Christian religion to the same cause. All these enemies of the truth, and of true miracles, only followed the example of the Pharisees,—their fathers and predecessors in this cause,—who said of the miracles of Christ himself, "That he cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils." But this evasion is a clear proof, that those who use it were convinced of the reality of the facts, which they could not deny, as is justly observed by the learned protestant author of the Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul. + where he says "To impute miracles to magic is by no means agreeable to the notions of those who in this age disbelieve Christianity. It will therefore be needless to show the weakness of that supposition; but that supposition itself is no inconsiderable argument of the truth of the facts. Next to the apostles and evangelists, the strongest witnesses of the undeniable force of that truth are Celsus and Julian, and other ancient opponents of the Christian religion," (and we may add Osiander, Whittaker, Calvin, and others as equally strong witnesses of the miracles of the later ages,) "who were obliged to solve what they could not contradict, by such an irrational and absurd imagination." And indeed, the absurdity of this imagination will readily appear from the third and fourth rules of the criterion above laid down, for distinguishing

Lib. de Eccles. p. 354.

whether miracles be from God or from Satan, to which

I refer my reader.

X. Let now any man of common sense seriously consider all these circumstances attending the testimony given in every age in attestation of miracles, and declare, is it, I don't say probable, but even morally possible, that such testimony can be false. And indeed, were it possible for such testimony to deceive us with regard to the existence of miracles, how could we reasonably believe any one fact that happened before our own days, or of which we have not been eye-witnesses ourselves? But we need not argue much upon this point: the testimony for the continuation of miracles in every age since the apostles, is so full, so perfect, and so every way solid and well-founded, that two of the greatest and most inveterate adversaries that have ever appeared against miracles, have been forced to acknowledge it; and for that very reason childishly refuse to trust the issue of the cause upon that foundation. These two adversaries are the celebrated Dr. Middleton and Mr. Hume: "There is not a single point in all history," says the Doctor, "so constantly, explicitly, and unanimously affirmed by them all (church historians,) as the continual succession of all those (miraculous) powers through all ages, from the earliest father who first mentions them, down to the time of the reformation, which same succession is still farther deduced by persons of the most eminent character for their probity, learning, and dignity in the Romish church to this very day."* Such is the character the Doctor gives of the testimony for the existence of miracles in all ages, which surely nothing but the force of truth could extort from him; but seeing it would be impossible and ridiculous to deny the continuation of miracles if tried by this testimony, he sets out with this determined resolution, to reject all miracles after the apostolic age, and never so much as bring one of them to the test of this examination, be cause, "If the cause," says he, "must be tried by the

^{*} Preface to Inquiry.

unanimous consent of fathers, we shall find as muce reason to believe those powers were continued even to the latest ages, as to any other, how early and primitive soever, after the days of the apostles."* And as to Mr. Hume, he expressly recommends to his readers, "to form a general resolution never to lend any attention to the testimony (for miracles in favour of religion,) with whatever specious pretext it may be covered." And he assigns this plain reason, because, says he, "Those who are so silly as to examine the affair by that medium, and seek particular flaws in the testimony, are almost sure to be confounded."† This is plain dealing with a witness; and the most authentic attestation from the mouth of a declared enemy, that the positive testimony for the perpetual continuation of miracles in all preceding ages. of the church, is so absolute, so complete, and so wellfounded, that it is impossible to find the smallest flaw in it, even by the clear-sighted David Hume himself, notwithstanding the acuteness of his genius and the ardent desire of his heart to find one.

XI. The natural and necessary conclusion from all these observations and reasonings is, 'That the existence of miracles of the second class above-mentioned, viz. those attested by judicious historians, or other writers of credit and authority in every age, is founded on such an ample, full, and perfect positive testimony, as exceeds any other historical fact whatsoever, according to Dr. Middleton, and that no possible flaw can be found in it, according to Mr. Hume; consequently, that no man in his sober senses can call their existence in question, without destroying all historical faith whatsoever, and without acting in direct opposition to one of the essential principles of the human mind, which obliges us to yield our assent to that conviction which a full and unexceptionable testimony necessarily carries along with it in matters of fact, either past or at a distance, as Dr. Beattie proves at large in his Essay on Truth.

^{*} Pref. to Inq. See more to this purpose above. † Ess. on Miracles as cited by Dr. Campbell, Dissert. p. 60, 61

XII. I shall conclude this subject by the testimonies of two other celebrated Protestants, who, from the force of the continual attestation of miracles in every age, were thoroughly convinced of the reality of their existence down to their own days, and whose authority ought certainly to have great weight with every true child of the reformation.—The first is Luther himself. the great apostle of the reformation, who in his book on the Jews,* says, "Through the course of fifteen hundred years past, the Jews have heard that there is the word of God, have seen the greatest signs and wonders, and have raged against them." And a little after he adds, speaking of the Christian faith, "From God we have learned and received it, as the eternal word and truth of God, confessed and confirmed by miracles and signs during these fifteen hundred years to this present time." Nay, what is still more to our purpose, in his book De Purgatione quorundum articulorum, he even attests miracles wrought in his own time at the shrines of saints, and attests it as a thing so notorious and evident, that it can admit of no doubt. "Who can gainsay these things," says he, "which God to this day worketh miraculously at the tombs of the saints !- Ad Divorum sepulcra." The other testimony I shall bring is that of the learned Grotius, whose abilities as a scholar and judicious critic are justly admired by the world. This great man, commenting upon these words of our Saviour, 'These signs shall follow those that believe,' declares himself thus: "As the later ages also are full of testimonies of the same thing, I do not know by what reason some are moved to restrain that gift to the first ages only; wherefore, if any one would even now preach Christ in a manner agreeable to Him, to nations that know him not, I make no doubt but the force of the promise will still remain." I shall make no further observation on these two respectable witnesses than this,—that the force of truth must be exceedingly great, which obliges people,

^{*} Tom. vii. Wittemb. p. 209.

even against the interest of their own cause, to acknowledge it; and that the only reason which moved others afterwards to deny it, is, not the love of truth, nor any new light they had got unknown to those before them, but the miserable necessity of their cause, which, as Dr. Middleton fairly acknowledges, forced them into this sad alternative, either absolutely to reject the continuation of miracles in the Christian church,—in spite of all the strong and unexceptionable evidence to the contrary, or fairly to give up the reformation as the work of Satan, and yield the palm to the Catholic church.

XIII. We now proceed to consider the third class of miracles, according to the division given above, to wit, such as have undergone the examination of the church in her processes for the canonization of saints, and are published to the world as true, under the sanction of her authority, in consequence of such examination. We shall here find such precautions taken for ascertaining the truth of those miracles so approved, as render it morally impossible for deceit or fraud, or mistake to enter. It is a common calumny frequently thrown out against the church, that her pastors have an interest in promoting the belief of miracles, that they therefore encourage forgeries and impositions of this kind,—that having the power in their hand, they hinder all proper examination of such as appear among them; in a word, that they promote every imposture in this matter and, discourage all means of detection. The futility of this calumny is nearly too self-evident on many accounts; for what man of common sense will ever believe that such numbers of holy, pious, and learned men in every age, would be all so lost to every sense of virtue and honesty, as to promote and encourage an imposture of this kind; and that not one or two, but as many impostures and impositions upon mankind as there are miracles received and approved by the Catholic church; especially if it be added that these very men openly profess it to be a sacred article of their faith, that it is a damnable sin to promote or propagate falsehoods in

matters of religion, or to propose a false object of veneration to the Christian people? Who, in his sober senses. could persuade himself, that in so many ages, in such different countries, among such vast numbers of people as must be concerned in this matter, not one should ever be found of common honesty enough to discover the fraud, and undeceive his fellow creatures? Whence comes it that, of such vast numbers as have apostatized from the Catholic church, and who, by their conduct on that occasion, have evidently shown they wanted neither the will nor the means for making such a discovery, none have ever yet been able to make out the charge? The reason is plain, because the accusation is not only false and groundless, but diametrically opposite to the whole tenor of the church's conduct in this matter. Far from encouraging, she punishes any imposture of this kind most severely, when she discovers them, and uses every means in her power,—the strictest and most rigorous that human wisdom could devise, -in order to prevent them, and to preserve her children from every suspicion of fraud in things of so great importance for their spiritual welfare; and we find, that this has not only been her constant care, even from the very earliest ages, but that in these later times, instead of remitting any thing of her primitive vigilance and fervour, she has greatly increased it, and used much greater strictness and rigour for some ages past in these matters than she was wont to do in times of old.

XIV. The great heroes of Christianity,—those blessed martyrs who laid down their lives in the midst of torments, with the most heroic constancy, for the sake of Jesus Christ, were, on that account, entitled at their death, according to his promises, to an immediate admission to his glory. Accordingly we find from the unanimous and most authentic records of antiquity, that the greatest honours were paid to them, after their deaths, by the Christian world. The faithfu assembled in crowds at their martyrdoms to be witnesses of their glorious victories;—they gathered up their venerable

remains with the greatest ardour;—they assembled afterwards every year at their sacred sepulchres to celebrate the day of their triumph;—the history of their confession and martyrdom was publicly read at their meetings for the instruction and encouragement of the faithful. and their acts were communicated to the most distant churches for their mutual comfort and edification.* We find, however, from the same ancient records, that it was not sufficient to have suffered martyrdom to entitle one immediately to these sacred honours; it was further required, that their martyrdom should be publicly recognized and acknowledged by the chief pastors of the church. It was the province of these pastors to judge whether the person was to be esteemed a real martyr or not; --- whether there was just grounds to believe he was in possession of eternal bliss, and consequently whether or not the honours given to martyrs were due This was thought necessary even in those early ages to prevent impostures, and preserve the too easy multitude from being carried away by appearances; hence came the distinction of approved martyrs, martyrs vindicati, and those who were not so; and to give to these last the honours due only to the former, was always esteemed a crime, and as such severely punished by the church. Of this there is a striking example in the famous Lucilla of Carthage, who was so much offended at being reprimanded for this crime, as to become one of the great causes and promoters of the Donatist schism. It was some time before these holy servants of God, who died in peace, after spending their days in the rigours of penance, or in the heroic practice of Christianvirtues, were admitted to the same honours after their deaths as were given to the martyrs; and it was necessary, that, besides the sanctity of their lives, unquestionable proofs of their being in possession of God in heaven should appear, before these honours were given them.

[•] See the letter of the Church of Smyrna to that of Philadelphia, giving an account of the martyrdom of their holy bishop St. Polycarp, and of the behavior of the faithful upon that occasion.

Miracles wrought by Almighty God on having recourse to their prayers, or by applying their sacred relics, or the like, were unanimously received as the most undoubted, and indeed the only certain proofs of their felicity; because, though the sanctity of their lives is the great foundation of their glory in heaven, if they persevered therein to the end, yet however incontestable the proofs of their sanctity may be, their perseverance cannot be so certainly known, except heaven itself speak in their favour after their death, and attest their felicity by miracles. Hence miracles are always considered as a most necessary condition in the canonization of saints, even of martyrs themselves, as being the only assured proofs of their having persevered to the last in these holy dispositions, which alone could entitle them to hea-

venly glory.

XV. Now, the taking cognizance of miracles for this end has always been the province of the chief pastors of the church, who have ever looked upon it as an affair which required the most mature deliberation and the greatest circumspection; particularly in these laterages, in which the examination of these matters has been, by the whole church, unanimously referred to the judgment of the bishops of Rome, who have thereupon thought proper to redouble their vigilance, and increase the strictness of the examinations that were wont to be observed in former ages. We have a remarkable example of this about the year 1220, in the letter of Honorius III. addressed to the general chapter of the Cistercian order, and the bishop of the place, wherein he narrates: "That many bishops and religious persons, together with the abbot and convent of St. Mauritius, had some time before given him an account of numbers of miracles wrought by the intercession of their late holy abbot Mauritius, and of the constant and general opin on which all that country had of his sanctity, and therefore had intreated him to have him canonized; that in conse quence of this application, he had sent a commission to the bishop of Lyons and the abbot of St. Loup, to make

a juridical examination of these miracles, and of the life of the holy abbot, in order to have a just and solid ground for granting the request; that these commissioners had indeed sent him a list of many great miracles, said to be wrought by God through the merits of the holy bbot, and attested upon oath by several witnesses; but as it did not appear by the account sent him that the commissioners had examined the witnesses severally up on the subjects and circumstances of their attestations, with that care and diligence requisite in an affair of such importance, that therefore he could not proceed upon then information, and ordered the said general chapter and the diocesan bishop to cause the witnesses to be reexan ined separately, with that care and diligence which is went and ought to be used in such matters."* From which it evidently appears how scrupulous the Holy See was even in these middle ages, (wherein the adversaries of the Camolic church pretend so many corruptions, especially with regard to miracles, crept in) of admirting any thoug of this kind as true, but upon the strictest scrutiny, and the most incontestable evidence which the nature of the thing could bear.

XVI. After the death of St. Francis of Assisium, great numbers of miracles were said to be wrought by his intercession; upon which Pope Gregory IX. ordered a strict examination to be made of them; and that he might proceed with the greatest caution, he commissioned some cardinals to preside in this scrutiny, whom he knew to be least favourable to the cause. Accordingly the affair was discussed with all possible diligence, and the miracles were found to be so indisputably true, that it was resolved to proceed to his canonization two years after his death. The same attention was used by the same Pope in examining the miracles wrought by St. Antony of Padua, which were thereupon found to be so certain, so great and numerous, that he was canonized the very vear after. About the beginning of

^{*} This is the substance of his Holiness's rescript, as narrated in Decret. lib. 2, tit. 20. cap. Venerabili de Testib. et Attestat.

the fifteenth century flourished that most wonderful man St. Vincent Ferrerius, after whose death the strictest enquiry was made of the miracles wrought by his intercession; and by the process of his canonization by Pope Calixtus III. it appears, that upwards of eight hundred miracles had been proved to be wrought by him, and this proof supported by the most convincing testimonies.

XVII. But nothing will give us a better idea of the caution used by the Holy See in these matters, than the following extract of the decree of Pope Nicholas V. for the canonization of St. Bernardin of Sienna, in the year 1450, six years after his death: "In the time of our predecessor Eugenius IV. so many miracles were reported to have been done by the merits and intercession of St. Bernardin, that the most pressing solicitations were made to the Apostolic See to have the reality of those miracles inquired into with proper care, to the end that, after the truth was manifested, due honour might be paid by the church militant on earth, to him who was proved, by the testimony of God, to reign in glory in the church triumphant in heaven. Our predecessor did what was requisite in a matter of so great importance, and, according to the custom of the Apostolic See, intrusted the business to three cardinals of the holy Roman church, who were empowered to send two venerable bishops, with commission to make the most exact researches in order to discover the truth. And having spent some months in this work, they returned to Rome, and gave a faithful account of what they found. But our predecessor being taken out of the world before that business was ended; and solicitations being made to us to have it resumed, we resolved to. proceed with the utmost care and circumspection. Therefore we appointed three cardinals of the holy Roman church, to send two venerable bishops a second time to inquire into the truth, that so we might proceed with more security after this repeated search. Accordingly, they sent two bishops, who, at their return, did

not only confirm what had been discovered in the time of our predecessor, but also brought attestations of several evident miracles which had been wrought since that time: Nevertheless, we did not let this second inquiry suffice, but resolved to make a third, and therefore sent two other venerable bishops, who, after some months, returned with the most convincing proofs that miracles were frequently wrought; and, in particular, they brought an exact narrative of some of the most remark able ones. After this we sent another bishop to Sienna, who, having staid there some months, bore witness at his return to the truth and reality of the miracles. sent the same venerable person also to Aquilla, where the Saint died, to inquire whether any miracles were wrought there. At his return he confirmed the attestations of others who had been sent before to the same place, and moreover related the most stupendous works which had been done since the time of the inquiry made by those others; which stupendous works were done not in corners and hidden places, but publicly, and in the sight of the whole multitude. Having received these informations, we caused every particular to be laid open in our consistory, where they were examined. But the matter being of great importance, the determination was put off till another consistory should be held, that so each cardinal might, in the mean time, examine every article more maturely at home. In this second consistory all the votes concurred in this, that the miracles were so many, and so very evident, and the sanctity of the Saint's life, and the purity of his faith so manifest, that there was reason sufficient to proceed to the canonization." &c.

XVIII. Let it now be remembered that all these steps were taken, and this decree published within the space of only six years after the Saint's death, and in the country where the whole was transacted, at which time every particular must have been perfectly well known to all the world, and fresh in every body's mind. Let me then ask any man of common sense, Whether he thinks.

it possible to use greater caution in investigating the truth than was here done? or that such investigation as this could be deceived in ascertaining the truth of public and notorious facts? or, that had any falsehood been advanced in the decree, it could have escaped detection, considering the time, place, and other circumstances in

which it was published to the world?

XIX. These several examples, then, which I have brought, show plainly how very far it is from the design or intention of the pastors of the church to impose false relations or forged miracles upon her children; nay, how scrupulously careful they are not to advance or approve any thing of this kind, till by the most mature and repeated examinations they have acquired the most undoubted proofs of the truth. All which will still farther appear by the regulations of the council of Trent, and the improvements made in the rigour of these investigations since that period, by which the sovereign Pontiff now regulates his conduct in these researches. bishops assembled in that council, among their many other wise and prudent regulations, did not let the examination of miracles escape their attention. were sensible that abuses might creep in among the simple people, and false or supposititious miracles might, in particular places that were more remote from the means of detection, be handed about and believed among them, if not properly prevented. Wherefore, following the example of former ages, they made a decree, by which they not only confirm to the chief pastors of the church the right of examining any new miracles, and of the rejecting or approving them as they should see cause, but also strictly forbid any new miracle to be admitted till it be properly examined and approved by the diocesan bishop; the words of the decree are as follows:— The holy synod decrees—also, that no new miracles shall be admitted without the previous examination and approbation of the said bishop, who, when he is arrived at any certainty about them, may, with the advice of divines and other pious persons, do what he shall judge

agreeable to truth and piety.** This wise regulation effectually discourages all forgeries and impostures; for as these can never stand the test of a juridical examination, so without that they can never make great progress in deceiving the simple, nor have any public

weight or authority in the church.

XX. Though no other diligence had been used for ascertaining the reality of miracles than what we have seen above, yet it must be owned that these were very sufficient to convince any reasonable person of the certainty of facts so examined and attested. Repeated examinations by different commissioners, who were men of known learning and probity, made at different times, of witnesses upon oath, concerning facts of their own nature, open, plain, and notorious, said to be performed in the presence of multitudes of people of all ranks and stations, and these examinations made at or soon after the time when the facts were said to have happened, and when numbers of eye and ear-witnesses were alive, and every thing fresh in their memories, and the process and result of their examinations tried with the most mature deliberation by a body of learned and impartial persons, and, when approved by them, published to the world among these very people, and in those very places where the whole was transacted, and where it was impossible that any fraud advanced should escape detection; all these circumstances concurring are doubtless such assured means of ascertaining the facts so examined and attested, that it scarce appears possible any thing more could be added for giving to the human mind the most assured conviction; and yet we find that the church, . from her ardent desire of rendering these matters absolutely incontestable, and of precluding every possible cavil of her enemies, has, even in these later times, added more precautions, and in her processes for the canonization of saints uses still greater rigour and severity in the proofs she demands for ascertaining the mira-

^{*} Mess, 25. Decr. de Invoc. et Vener. Sanct.

cles said to be wrought by their means. The whole series of this process is described at large by one who perfectly well knew it, the late Pope Benedict XIV. in his valuable and elaborate work on the canonization of saints, out of which I shall here give a clear and succinct account of what concerns miracles; which, whoever considers with due attention, will, I dare say, readily acknowledge it to be impossible for the wit of man to use more effectual means for coming to the knowledge of the truth; and that if facts so examined and attested could, notwithstanding this, be false or forged, we must

bid adieu to all faith and credit among men.

XXI. When any holy servant of God dies in the ogour of sanctity, whose virtuous and holy life gives a wellgrounded hope to those who knew it, that his soul is received into eternal glory, the faithful are not hindered from having recourse in private to his intercession, and of asking benefits from Almighty God through the help of his prayers. If these favours be not granted, and no further signs of his being with God be manifested, this private devotion naturally decays, and after a time ceases entirely. But if Almighty God should be pleased to grant the favours demanded, and even to work miracles at the invocation of his holy servant, these being published among the faithful, increase the reputation of his sanctity, and give encouragement to others to have recourse to his intercession, in hopes of receiving the like blessings from God through his means. When this happens to be the case, things are allowed to go on without any judicial cognizance being taken of them for some time. Experience shows how easily the bulk of mankind, especially the unlearned, allow themselves to be surprised by any thing that strongly effects them. The common opinion of the sanctity of the person deceased, if followed by a report, whether true or false, of any miracle wrought by his means, cannot fail at first to make a deep impression on the minds of the vulgar; but if the foundation be false, the superstructure will soon fall to the ground. A little time must be given,

and some allowance must be made to these first transports of devotion. Error cannot always continue to impose; and imposture sooner or later must be discovered. But if the reputation of the person's sanctity increases; if the fame of supernatural events wrought by his intercession continues; if, instead of diminishing, these things make greater and greater progress, and gain daily greater credit in the minds of men; then, from this constant and increasing public voice in his favour, there arises a well-grounded motive for making a more particular inquiry into the nature and truth of those things which are alleged. If, therefore, the state, or any religious order, or any particular person or persons, who may have been connected with the deceased, should think proper, upon this public renown, to interest themselves in having his cause tried at the supreme tribunal, in order to his canonization, their first application must be made to the diocesan bishop, to whom it belongs, in full right, to take a judicial cognizance in the first instance, of the public fame in the saint's favour, both as to his holy life and miracles. This first judgment is so indispensably required, that the court of Rome will not admit any cause of this kind to a hearing till this step be taken, and the acts of the judicial inquiry of the bishop be fully proved before them, with all the formalities prescribed to be observed by him in making it. Now these formalities are ten in number, and are as follows: 1. To avoid all precipitation (as I observed above), the public fame of the sanctity and miracles of the deceased must have existed for a considerable time, before the bishop is allowed to begin his proceedings of inquiring about them. 2. The bishop himself must preside, if possible, at all the steps of the process; and if, through necessity, he be obliged to substitute any of his inferior clergy in his place, this judge must have a doctor in divinity, and a licenciate in canon law for his assistants. 3. He who takes the depositions of the witnesses, must counter-sign every article with the witnesses themselves, who subscribe them. 4. Each deponent must be asked

a circumstantial relation of the facts he attests: It is not allowed to read over to the other witnesses what was deposed by the first, and cause it to be confirmed by their consent; but each one must be examined apart by himself, and their answers extended at full length to each interrogatory. Nay, 5. The notary, and the promoter of the cause, as well as the witnesses themselves, must all be put under oath to observe the most profound silence with regard to the questions put, or the answers given. 6. Information must be sent to the Pope of the whole procedure, and of the judgment of the bishop passed thereupon. 7. A clean copy of all the papers must be made out in proper form, and these authenticated and well sealed, must be sent to the Congregation of Rites at Rome. 8. All the originals are preserved in the archives of the cathedral church of the diocese, in a proper chest, well sealed, and under different keys, which are deposited with different persons of rank and character. 9. Besides the witnesses presented to the bishop by those who solicit the cause, he must also examine as many others as he can get account of, who are capable of giving any proper information. extra-judicial acts or attestations are allowed to be inserted among the authentic writings of the process.— Now, who does not see in all this procedure the utmost care and diligence used to prevent all imposition, and come to a distinct and certain knowledge of the truth? The particular examination of each witness separately, the ignorance each one is in of the questions put to the others,—the solemn oath all are obliged to take never to disclose the subject of the questions put, or the answers given,—the not being content with the witnesses presented by the solicitors of the cause, but the procuring as many others as can be got,—the care to preserve the papers from all improper inspection; -what are all these but the most efficacious steps to prevent collusion. either among the present witnesses, or in those who may be afterwards examined, and to procure from each the most exact information of what he knows, according

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as it really exists in his mind? One would suppose that a miracle proved by this judgment alone might justly be deemed sufficient to gain all belief and credit from any reasonable unprejudiced person; and yet all this is but as it were the prelude to what follows after.

XXII. When the diocesan bishop has done his part, and from the evidence he has got in the above trial, has passed his sentence as to the miracles examined by him, an authentic copy of the whole process, well sealed, is sent to the Congregation of Rites at Rome, and there it must lie deposited with the notary of that congregation for ten years, before the seals can be opened, or any further step be taken in the cause. During this period, however, particular attention is directed to the following circumstances: 1st. Whether the public renown concerning the virtues and miracles of the saint continues in vigour and increases, or decays and fails. 2dly. Whether any serious accusations appear against him, or any strong suspicions, any weighty doubts are entertained concerning the propriety of his conduct. 3dly. If he had composed any writings during his lifetime, they are most minutely examined, to see if they contain any error, either with regard to faith or morals; and if any of these things appear against him, the cause is dropped entirely, and buried in eternal oblivion. But if all these particulars are favourable, at the expiration of the ten years the cause is taken up again in the Congregation of Rites in this form: The solicitors for the cause demand of this court that the proceedings of the. diocesan bishop may be opened and examined. This is done with all formality; and if, upon examining these proceedings, it be found, that every thing was performed according to rule, then the Pope is applied to for a commission to authorize this congregation to proceed in the cause, which is granted accordingly. Then the cause is taken entirely out of the hands of the diocesan, and every step that follows is taken by authority of the sovereign Pontiff. The Congregation of Rites is a tribunal at Rome, composed of a number of cardinals, who

we the chief judges, and of judges of the second order, who are called Consultors. The officers of this court are, 1. The promoter of the faith, or solicitor-general, who represents the public, and proposes every difficulty he can invent against the persons whose causes are tried in this court. 2. The secretary of the congregation. And, 3. The apostolic protonotary, with several inferior officers, advocates, notaries, and the like; all of whom take a solemn oath of secrecy with regard to the matters treated before them in causes of canonization, while pending, that by this means nothing may transpire that could give the smallest occasion to those who plead for the cause to take any undue measures to promote it. When the cause is taken entirely into this court, the first step is to name three commissioners, authorized by the Pope, to take proper informations upon the spot, that is, in the place itself where the miracles were performed, and where the saint's body is interred. These are generally three of the neighboring bishops, one of whom is generally the Ordinary of the diocese where the saint's body is, and two of these three make a quorum. Then the solicitors for the cause draw up in writing the articles to be examined by the commissioners, and class under different titles the several facts and miracles to be proved, which they judge the best founded, and the most proper for evidencing the sanctity of the deceased and his glory in heaven. All these preparatory writings are given in to be revised by the promoter of the faith, who from them draws up instructions for his substitute with the commissioners, who is called the vice-promoter, and these contain all the objections and difficulties he can invent against the facts and miracles proposed by the other party to be examined by the judges. All these papers, together with the commission to the judges, and the form of the oath to be taken by the court and witnesses, are carefully sealed up in one packet, and sent to the Ordinary of the place, who naving convened all the others concerned, the commission is opened and read, the oaths are taken, and the

proper officers of the court appointed and sworn. A day is then fixed upon, and the witnesses called, and their depositions taken in the church, or some chapel or holy place, in order to inspire them with greater respect, and greater horror of perjury. The oath they take upon the holy gospels contains two parts; 1. That they will declare the whole truth they know, without concealing or disguising any part of it. And, 2. That they will not communicate to any one either the questions put to them, or the answers they give. After taking this oath, they are examined as to their quality, age, faith, learning, and then as to the several articles proposed by the solicitor of the cause, and on any other subject which the judges think proper. At the end of every session the papers are all sealed and locked up till the next meeting: and when the whole information is taken, all the papers are authenticated by the names and seals of the judges and principal officers of the court; the originals deposited in the archives of the diocese; and clean copies of the whole, collated in presence of the judges themselves and authenticated by their seals and subscriptions, are sent to Rome by a courier express, who is also sworn to execute his commission with all fidelity.

XXIII. Such is the procedure of this court in general; we shall now see more in detail the nature of the proof required by it in order to ascertain the facts examined. The general principle of the Congregation of Rites is, to treat these causes with the very same rigour with which criminal causes are tried in civil courts, and require that the facts be proved with the same exactness, and all proceedings carried on with the same severity, as if done for the punishment of crimes. Suspicious or inconclusive testimony, such as would not be allowed as a ground for condemning a criminal, is rejected in this court as incapable of proving a miracle. Hence the following conditions are absolutely required in the witnesses, 1. There must be at least two or three who speak unanimously upon the same fact and its circum-

stances. A solitary testimony proves nothing; contradictory testimonies annul and destroy one another; and such as differ from one another about essential articles, render one another mutually suspected. Those which re-unite in the same point may serve as a support or corroboration, but give no certain proof: This is only allowed when the same facts and circumstances are uniformly attested by at least two or three witnesses. 2. The witnesses must depose to what they themselves saw with their own eyes, or heard with their own ears. Hearsay declarations, and testimonies at second-hand, are never admitted in the proof of miracles. 3. The witnesses must be of a sufficient age, and have proper knowledge and discernment to distinguish the nature of the things they relate; they must be Catholics of known probity, and give an account of their very motives for the testimony they give. 4. All the objections to their testimony that reason and the circumstances can furnish, either from their persons, qualities, or depositions, are proposed and urged by the vice-promoter of the faith; a full hearing to them is given by the court, and they must be all solved by the other party to the satisfaction of the judges.

XXIV. When the acts and proceedings of the commissioners are sent to Rome they are strictly examined by the Congregation of Rites, both as to their authenticity and validity; that is, whether every form prescribed by law has been duly observed, and every prudent precaution taken to come at the truth; and if the congregation is satisfied as to this point, it proceeds to re-examine the whole cause; but fifty years must be elapsed from the death of the saint before these steps can be taken. This delay is ordered for the reasons mentioned before, that nothing might be done with precipitation, and to see if any new light might appear in the mean time, either for or against the cause. And when, after this period, the cause is resumed, and all the judicial acts and proceedings of the commissioners verified and approved, then some of the principal articles of that process are selected

to be tried and examined with the utmost rigour by thi congregation itself, in three extraordinary assemblies. which are held at proper intervals for that purpose; and with regard to miracles, the question proposed to be discussed concerning them is, Whether or not a competent number of true miracles has been sufficiently proved in the process made by the commissioners? And notwithstanding all the precautions that have been used before, one may say with truth, that it is only now in discussing this question that the trial of the reality of the miracles is made. To proceed with greater distinction, the question proposed is divided into two, each of which is examined separately: The first is, Whether the actual existence of the miraculous facts produced in the process, have been thoroughly proved before the commissioners? Secondly, Whether these facts be really supernatural and true miracles, the work of God and of good angels? The discussion of the first of these brings on a review of the whole process, wherein the proceedings of the commissioners, the witnesses, their qualifications, their depositions, and all the circumstances are canvassed; the promoter of the faith himself pleads every difficulty he can imagine against them; all which must be thoroughly solved by the solicitors for the cause, and if they fail in this, to the conviction of the judges, the miracle is rejected as not proved. If the existence of the facts be indubitable, then the court proceeds to examine the other question, Whether these facts so proved are supernatural and true miracles?

XXV. In examining this point three different classes of miracles are distinguished. Some are of such a stupendous nature as evidently to surpass all created power, and show themselves at once to be the work of the Creator, and these are of the first order. Others, less astonishing may, for ought we know, be within the power and abilities of those created intellectual beings, whose knowledge and power far exceed ours; and these are of the second order. Others again are in substance natural events which may be produced by the assistance of

art; but from the concurrence of circumstances, and the manner in which they are performed, become truly

miraculous; and these are of the third order.

Now, when any miracle of the first order is produced. and the fact undoubtedly proved, there needs no further discussion; it carries in its bosom the proofs of its divinity, and shows itself at first sight to be the immediate work of God; and in this view the raising a dead person

to life is always considered.

XXVI. In miracles of the second order, which are plainly supernatural, that is, above all the efforts of human power, the question is, to discern whether they be the work of God or the operations of evil spirits. In deciding this, the fact is examined by the rules of the criterion, the most important of which we have above described. Some other circumstances are added by this court, which in all make five principal qualities to constitute in their judgment a divine miracle. They are as follows: 1st. The reality of the effect; the power of evil spirits is limited, that of God has no bounds; the marvellous produced by the devil, is at best but a vain appearance, which fascinates the senses, or seduces the attention; but a true miracle operates a real effect. 2dly. The duration; effects of enchantment are frequently only instantaneous; those of true miracles are perman-3dly. The utility; God Almighty does not employ his power in vain. Childish events and changes that serve only to cause fear or astonishment, are unworthy the attention of a reasonable man, nor do they deserve that the divine wisdom should make use of a particular order of his providence to produce them; still less can it be supposed that Almighty God would act in a miraculous manner to exhibit things indecent, or ridiculous, or favourable to any unjust or pernicious designs. 4thly, The means used; prayer, invocation of the holy name of God, of the blessed Trinity, of the saints, are the means for obtaining true miracles from God; false wonders are produced by having recourse to the devil. by superstitious spells, shameful artifices, or extravagant

actions. 5th. The principal object; Almighty God can have no other ultimate end in all he does but his own glory, and our real happiness. The confirmation or the advancement of piety and Christian justice, and the sanctification of souls are the only supreme motives ultimately worthy of his goodness and infinite wisdom Miracles of the second order must be attended with all these qualities, before they can be admitted in this court as divine, and the want of any one of them would effec-

tually discredit it for ever.

XXVII. Miracles of the third order, such as miraculous cures of diseases, are examined in the strictest manner; and it must be proved to the conviction of the judges, that they were attended with all those circumstances which evidently show that the operation was divine. The circumstances indispensably required in cures of diseases are as follows: 1st. That the disease be considerable, dangerous, inveterate, and such as commonly resists the strength of known medicines, or at least that it be tedious and difficult by their means to produce a perfect cure. 2dly. That the disease be not come to its crisis, in which it is natural to look for a remission of its symptoms and a cure. 3dly. That the ordinary helps of natural remedies have not been used, or at least that there be just reason to presume from the time elapsed since taking them, and from other circumstances, that they could have no influence in the cure. 4thly. That the cure be sudden and instantaneous; that the violent pains or imminent danger cease all at once, instead of diminishing gradually, as happens in the operations of nature. 5thly. That the cure be perfect and entire. 6thly. That there happened no crisis, nor any sensible alteration which might have naturally wrought the cure. 7thly. That the health recovered be constant and not followed by a speedy relapse.

XXVIII. The concurrence of all these conditions and circumstances must be proved with the utmost evidence before the miraculousness of these facts can be approved; and in this discussion the greatest rigour is

used.—The promoter of the faith starts every possible difficulty; and to assist him in this, he is allowed to call in divines, physicians, natural philosophers, mathematicians, and others skilled in the respective matters belonging to the miracle under examination. case is laid before them, and if they can give any ra-- tional and natural explanation to show how the effect might be produced without having recourse to miracles, or if they can urge any well founded objection against the miraculousness of the fact which the others cannot solve, the miracle is forthwith rejected. The solicitors for the cause however, are also allowed to call in learned people in the several sciences to their assistance, to answer the difficulties proposed by the promoter of the faith, and obviate his objections, if it be possible to do 80.

XXIX. Such is the procedure of the court of Rome in ascertaining the existence and continuation of miracles in these later ages; and by this rigorous process have been tried, approved, and published to the world. vast numbers of glorious miracles performed by Almighty God at the intercession of his saints, down to these days in which we live. Let then the most determined enemies of miracles consider attentively this short sketch of the proceedings I have here related, and let them seriously ask their own hearts whether the scrupulous attention and rigorous investigation of this court does not merit their highest approbation and praise, rather than excite their censure.—And let them say whether they think it possible for the most ingenious wit to invent more assured means for unmasking imposture and preventing error, than what is used by this tribunal The most sacred things in religion, solemn oaths and the fear of the greatest ecclesiastical censures, are used to draw out the exact truth from the witnesses. strongest precautions that human prudence can suggest are made use of to assure the judges of their capacity, their morals, and their disinterestedness. They proceed with slow steps and with all maturity, and the same

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matters are examined again and again at considerable intervals, so that there can be no danger of mistake from precipitation, nor of their being misguided by any enthusiastic zeal. And when we consider the proceedings of the Ordinary, and the scrutiny they undergo at Rome, the re-examination of the same subjects by the apostolical commissioners, and the discussion of their proceedings with the same severity,—the particular informations taken of the miracles themselves, and the conditions required to accompany them,—the opposition made to them by the promoter of the faith, and the disputes raised on purpose between physicians, and other learned people on each side of the question concerning them; we shall be forced to acknowledge that a miraculous fact, which has undergone this rigorous trial, and receives the approbation of this tribunal, is attended with such convincing evidence, that a man must have lost both common sense and reason who calls it any longer in question. Seeing, then, that numbers,—great numbers of miracles have passed this fiery ordeal, and have been published to the world with the full sanction and approbation of this court,—even in these present times, the conclusion is manifest, that the positive proof for the continuation of miracles is irrefragably strong and convincing, and that the miraculous powers have not till this day been taken from the Catholic church, that numbers of miracles continue from time to time to be wrought in her communion; that the promises of Christ in this respect have hitherto had no limitation, and that, as all the presumptive evidence formerly adduced tends to assure us, they will continue in their usual force to the end of ages.

APPENDIX,

BY WAY OF DIALOGUE:

IN WHICH THE AUTHORITY OF MIRACLES IN PROOF OF DOCTRINE S FURTHER EXAMINED AND ILLUSTRATED, BY BEING APPLIED TO A PARTICULAR EXAMPLE; AND THE DOCTRINE MADE USE OF FOR THAT PURPOSE IS THE CELEBRATED ARTICLE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION, WHICH, BEING EXPOSED TO MANY DIFFICULTIES, BOTH FROM SENSE AND REASON, IS THE MOST UNLIKELY OF ANY TO ADMIT OF SUCH A PROOF, AND THEREFORE THE MOST PROPER FOR SUCH EXAMINATION.

ORTHODOXUS. PHILARETES.

Orthod.—Good morrow, Philaretes; whence so early

a visit from you to-day? I hope all is well.

Phil.—All is well, thank God! but I am come to ask your opinion about a dispute that has lately occured between your friend Eusebius and Benevolus, concerning transubstantiation. Have you heard of it?

Orthod.—I have; and think Benevolus must have been indeed greatly excited, when he expressed himself in the unguarded manner he did against that doctrine,

if it be really true what is alleged of him.

Phil.—You mean, I suppose, when he said, 'He would not believe transubstantiation though Eusebius should work a miracle, yea, though he should raise a man from the dead in attestation of it.'

Orthod.—I do.

Phil.—Well, Sir, he not only said so in the heat of the dispute, but he has since repeated the same in all coolness; nay, he has affirmed it under his hand in some letters that have passed between him and Eusebius upon that subject, and in which he is so confident of being in the right, that he affirms, 'He is able to defend that proposition before a general council, and that he is as certain Eusebius is in the wrong in blaming it, as he is certain that the word of God is true.'

Orthod.—Boldly said indeed! But, pray, does he pretend to bring any proofs for that assertion? Does he allege any thing from the word of God in defence of it?

Phil.—He does, I assure you. I have noted down his arguments, and am come here this morning to have your opinion of the matter, as I would wish to under-

stand it perfectly.

Orthod.—You are always welcome to me, my dear sir, and never more so than when you come on such errands; for it yields me particular pleasure to give you all the assistance I can in improving your mind with useful knowledge, especially on the important sub-

ject of religion.

Phil.—I am infinitely obliged to you for your kindness, which I have already so often experienced, and of which I shall always preserve the most grateful remembrance. And now, if you please, let me know first what you think of the above proposition itself, and then I shall propose the arguments brought by Benevolus, in defence of it.

Orthod.—It needs very little knowledge of theology to see that the proposition is highly blameable and worthy of censure; and I am not surprised that several well-meaning serious Christians who have heard of it, are much offended at it. The very sound of it is hurtful to pious ears; and no wonder; for it implies a supposition nearly bordering upon blasphemy.

Phil.—I own, indeed, it sounds very harshly; but it does not appear to me to contain any thing blasphemous; I will therefore be glad if you give me your reasons for

passing upon it so severe a censure

Orthod.—I shall do so to your conviction. In the first place you must observe this truth, that God alone is master of life and death; no created being, however great its natural powers may be, can, by its own strength

either give life to any man at first, 'r restore it to him after God has deprived him of it. To give life then at first, or to restore it after death, is a work that requires the almighty power of the Creator.* If, therefore, Eusebius or any one else, as an instrument in the hand of God, should raise a man from death in attestation of transubstantiation, and yet Benevolus should refuse to believe that tenet, this refusal necessarily supposes that transubstantiation is a falsehood, notwithstanding the attestation given to it by this miracle; and as none but God is capable of performing such a miracle, it further supposes, that Almighty God can work a miracle proper to himself alone, in attestation of a falsehood, which every man of common sense must see is a most blasphemous supposition.

Phil.—I see well the force of what you say; but may it not be alleged, that though God himself can no more work miracles to support a falsehood, than he can lie or cheat; yet he may permit the devil or wicked men to work miracles for bad ends? And if so, then it may be further supposed that a miracle wrought in attestation of transubstantiation is the work of Satan and not of God, which at once frees Benevolus's proposition

from all shadow of blasphemy.

Orthod.—Properly speaking the devil can work no miracles at all; the lying signs and wonders which are within the reach of his power are very different from the Christian idea of a miracle; much less can Satan do any even of these lying wonders in those circumstances where his doing so would unavoidably be taken for the work of the Most High; † and in this I dare say Benevolus himself will join issue with me. But allowing that Almighty God should permit evil spirits to do things miraculous, that are within the sphere of their own natural strength, for bad ends, this could never excuse the above proposition from the charge of blasphemy, except you can prove at the same time that to raise a

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[•] See Chap. X. on the Criterion, where this is proved at large. † See this proved above, Chap. X. on the Criterion.

dead man to life is within the natural power of Satan; for this is the miracle Benevolus himself makes use of in his assertion.

Phil.—And why may it not be said that the devil can raise the dead?

Orthod.—Whoever attempts to prove this will find it a very heavy task, for several reasons; 1st, Because there are the strongest arguments from the word of God which prove that to raise the dead to life is an operation peculiar to God alone. 2dly. Because Deists and other infidels have long been labouring with all their might to prove such a power in Satan, as being of the utmost benefit to their cause, but have never yet been able to succeed in the attempt. 3dly. Because of the fatal consequences that will necessarily follow, if he should be able to prove his point.

Phil.—Pray what consequences would flow from

that ?

Orthod.-Nothing less than undermining the very foundation of Christianity! Observe: The Christian religion glories in having been attested by miracles which none but the Almighty could perform, and which on that account incontestably prove its divine origin. Among these the raising of the dead to life has always been esteemed a miracle of the first order, and the proper work of the finger of God. If, therefore, you can prove that this does not exceed the natural abilities of Satan, you, by so doing, deprive our holy religion of one of its chief supports, and bring a suspicion of falsehood on all the other miracles that were ever wrought in its favour: For if it be within the natural power of the devil to perform so great a miracle as is the raising of a dead man to life, what security can we have that he is not able to perform all the others also? And what an important piece of news will this be to Deism and infidelity? Let Benevolus therefore choose which side he pleases, he will never be able to extricate himself from this sad dilemma: "Either his proposition must stand condemned of blasphemy, or the Christian religion must be one of the strongest arguments in its vindication.

Phil.—What you say is indeed very strong, nor do I see what answer can possibly be made to it. I shall therefore give up the point entirely as to the proposition itself, and only wish to know what reply you would make to such arguments as may be used in its defence.

Orthod.—Have a little patience; we must not leave the proposition so soon. What I have said is not the only reason for condemning it. It is equally censurable on another account, which it is also necessary to show you, because it takes place even in the supposition that to raise the dead is a work within the natural powers of Satan. I suppose Benevolus does not imagine that if Eusebius should raise one from the dead in attestation of transubstantiation, he would make use of enchantments, or call upon the devil for his assistance. Eusebius, though a Catholic, is surely a Christian, who believes in one God, and in Jesus Christ his Son; and if he believes transubstantiation to be a true doctrine, he believes it for no other reason, but because he is persuaded it was revealed by God; and if ever he should attempt to raise one from the dead in attestation of it, he would do so only by invoking the Almighty God for that purpose.

Phil.—All this will be readily granted; but what

then?

Orthod.—Let us then suppose that Eusebius does call upon God to perform this miracle, and that the miracle called for is actually performed, with what face can Benevolus refuse to believe the doctrine thus attested? It is impossible for him to give any colour of reason for such incredulity, but by a supposition which leads to, or rather plainly includes another blasphemy; namely, that Almighty God, when invoked by teachers of false doctrine, but who pretend to be sent by him (for such Benevolus must believe Eusebius to be in the present case), and when called upon by them to work a miracle in testimony of their false doctrine, though he

will not himself perform the miracle, yet may permit the devil to perform it? Would not God in this supposition as effectually concur to testify a falsehood, as if he had wrought the miracle himself? Does not a king as effectually concur to confirm and approve any commission to which he allows his seal to be put by his minister, as if he had affixed it with his own hand? Miracles are the broad seal of heaven; the devils, as well as all other creatures, are but the ministers of God, in whatever way he pleases to employ them. therefore, Almighty God is directly called upon to perform any miracle, whether he does it himself, or permits the devil to do it, it is evidently the self-same thing as regards the weight of the attestation given by it to men; and in either case he equally concurs to attest a falsehood where the doctrine proposed is not true. If to assert this be not blasphemy, I know not what can be so. And yet even this is not all; there is still another great evil contained in this supposition; for if it could be proved that God, in the above circumstances, can allow the devil to perform the miracles required, we must then bid farewell to Christianity in this as well as in the former case. When we see wicked men, that set themselves openly to oppose God and his truths, endeavour by enchantments, and by calling upon the devil to perform signs and wonders to confirm their errors, we can easily see that, in cases of this kind, Almighty God, for his own wise ends, may permit the devil to use his natural powers, and do things miraculous in the eyes of the beholders. This was the case with the magicians of Pharaoh, and the false prophets mentioned in Deuteronomy xiii. and will be the case with Antichrist at the 'end of the world; but all examples of this kind carry their evidence on their foreheads, which shows that such teachers are not from God, even though signs and wonders should be performed. But when a person pretends to be sent by God, calls upon God to work a miracle in confirmation of what he teaches, and depends upon God alone for the performance of it; if this mir-

acle should actually be performed, and especially if it be a miracle of the highest order, and confessedly above the natural power of creatures, this must certainly give the most undoubted conviction, that that person is from God, and that what he teaches is true. Upon this ground . It was that the world was converted to Christianity. Its preachers professed to be commissioned by God to work miracles to attest the truth of what they preached, and in his name the miracles were accordingly performed. This was sufficient; mankind, from the very feelings of their own hearts, were convinced, that Almighty God, in these circumstances, could never have allowed wicked spirits to perform these miracles, had these teachers been impostors or their doctrine false, and therefore embraced Christianity as truths revealed by their Crea-If, therefore, it could be proved, that in the above circumstances Almighty God may allow the devil to perform the miracles required, though the doctrine attested by them be false, then it was imprudent to believe the first teachers of Christianity, since it was possible that their miracles may have been performed by Satan, and their doctrine be all a delusion! See to what shocking consequences Benevolus's proposition necessarily leads us!

Phil.—I must own I had no idea that it contained such consequences as these; and yet from what you have said, I am thoroughly convinced of its dreadful tendency; nor should I insist more upon the matter, only, as I may have occasion to converse with others about it, I would wish to know what can be said to the arguments by which they may pretend to support it.

Orthod.—Let us hear then what these arguments are. I may venture to assert beforehand that they are nothing to the purpose; nay, that you can be at no loss yourself, after what has been said, to see the weakness and incon-

clusiveness of them.

Phil.—I shall not say what intrinsic weight they may have but I cannot help thinking they have no small degree of show and appearance: I shall propose them as

ofollows, in Benevelus's own words: "Though you should work a miracle, even raise a person from the dead in attestation of transubstantiation, I would not be convinced by it, but would believe that Almighty God had permitted that miracle as a trial of my faith and steadfastness in the truth, and not as done for confirming that doctrine; and I have good reason to say so: 1. Because it is plain, both from the Old and New Testaments, as related of the magicians of Egypt, the false prophets mentioned in Deuteronomy xiii. and of Antichrist, that miracles may be wrought seemingly in attestation of false doctrine, though really they are permitted to try people's faith: And, 2. Because transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by miracle." In these words you see two reasons are included in defence of the proposition, namely. 'That God may permit wicked spirits to work miracles for their own bad ends, though his design in permitting them is only to try our faith; and that transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by any miracle.'

Orthod.—The first of these reasons has been answered already in what I have said before; but that you may still more clearly, see its weakness, I shall make another short observation upon it. You know there are two different kinds of miracles that may be wrought in confirmation of doctrine; some that do not exceed the natural powers of spiritual beings, whether good or bad, and are called relative miracles; others that are above the reach of all created power, and can be performed by none but God himself, and are therefore called absolute miracles.* A relative miracle, known to be such, can not of itself give thorough conviction of the truth of any doctrine, except it be otherwise proved to be the work of God or of his good angels commissioned by him. But a miracle of the second kind, which is above all created power, must give the most absolute conviction that the person at whose desire it is performed, is sent

[•] See above, Chap. I, on the different kinds of miracles.

by God, and that "the word of the Lord in his mouth is true."* Now, the example above cited by Benevolus from the scripture, are all of the first kind, merely relative; they show indeed that God may, and sometimes does, permit the devil, by means of his agents, to do extraordinary things within the compass of his own natural strength, seemingly in attestation of falsehood, though permitted by God only to try people's faith, or for some other good end. But what is that to the purpose? The raising of a dead man to life is a miracle above the utmost power of Satan,—a miracle proper to God alone, and which, therefore, is the most irrefragable proof that can be imagined of the truth of any doctrine in confirmation of which it is performed. Allowing then that the devil is sometimes permitted to do signs and wonders within the reach of his own abilities for the support of false doctrine, will this ever excuse Benevolus for refusing to believe a doctrine which he supposes confirmed by a miracle which nothing but Almighty power can perform? For my part, I see nothing to which such incredulity can be compared but that of Pharaoh; for though Moses wrought such miracles before that prince as obliged even his own magicians to confess, that "the finger of God was there," yet "Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them."† It is also extremely unfortunate for Benevolus, that our blessed Saviour himself brings this very case of "refusing to believe though one rose from the dead," as an instance of the most obstinate and consummate infidelity. † Nor do I see how Benevolus' proposition can well escape the same condemnation; at least I think it is manifest that this first argument you have brought cannot save him from it.

Phil.—I must indeed acknowledge I do not see how it can; for its fallacy is evident from the distinction between relative and absolute miracles, which I did not at first advert to. But what do you say to the second

reason alleged, that transubstantiation is altogether in-

capable of being proved by any miracle?

Orthod.—If this be really true, and can be clearly proved, then the dispute must be at an end, and victory must declare for Benevolus. I suppose he has summed up all that can be said to prove this assertion, as I know it is a favourite topic of his; let us hear then what he

says on this point.

Phil.—I assure you he says a great deal, and perhaps more to the purpose than you may imagine. I shall state his arguments in his own words: "I say transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by a miracle, and that for two reasons; first, because there is the same evidence against that doctrine that there can be for the truth of any miracle; I mean the testimony of the human senses; for, if I believe my senses, I cannot believe transubstantiation; and if I disbelieve my senses, I could not believe the truth of your miracle. Secondly, Transubstantiation is incapable of being proved by a · miracle, because it involves many contradictions in it." He then goes on to show some of the many contradictions which flow from this tenet, and which you see make it absolutely impossible that any miracle can prove true; for what in itself is founded in contradiction, and is therefore an impossibility, can never be proved to be a truth by any evidence whatever.

Orthod.—I imagined that his arguments would end there; for these are the topics that are commonly urged against transubstantiation, though they have been again and again answered fully by those who adopt that doctrine. I would not wish to take up your time by repeating here what they have said; but as all these arguments against transubstantiation are founded in either a real or pretended ignorance of what its advocates believe and teach concerning it, I shall lay before you a clear explication of that doctrine itself, by which you will immediately see how little to the purpose are all the

objections urged against it.

Phil.--You will do me a particular favour; for, to

myself, and, in the many disputes I have heard about it, I have often thought that the disputants did not seem to understand one another, or even to have a clear and

distinct idea of the subject matter in debate.

Orthod.—That is too often the case in disputes about religion. Every one thinks himself quite master of that subject, though in reality his knowledge of it be exceedingly superficial. He forms to himself, for the most part, very false and unjust ideas of the tenets of his adversaries, and, in contending against them, he only combats the phantoms of his own fancy. Hence, there is no end to wrangling, and that many very improper, nay, impious expressions are uttered on such occasions, among which I fear Benevolus's proposition will find a distinguished place. This, in a great measure, appears already, and will appear yet more as we go on with our examination of it.

Phil.—I dare say your observation is most just, and I am persuaded that many religious disputes would soon be at an end, if the parties, before they begin to argue, would fix the precise point in question, and lay down a clear and plain account of their respective tenets. I long to hear this done with regard to transubstantiation.

Orthod.—All the arguments of reason urged against this doctrine are drawn from philosophy; and you see the two arguments used by Benevolus are entirely of this kind. Hence it is incumbent on the advocates of transubstantiation, to reconcile it with sound philosophy, and all such objections against it must vanish. In philosophy we must distinguish two parts; what is founded in plain facts, and the experience of common sense, and what is merely systematical, and invented only to solve the phænomena of nature. The former is constant and uniform, and must be the same in all ages to every attentive inquirer; the other is fluctuating and inconstant, and has changed like the fashions almost in every age. Arguments have been urged against transubstantication, from the principles adopted by these different

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systems of philosophy, and have, with equal ease, been solved from the same principles. It is needless to repeat here what has been urged from such systems as are exploded in the present age. I shall therefore confine myself to what is now looked upon as the most certain and rational system, because more closely connected with experience and observation, and upon its principles, explain to you what Catholics teach concerning transubstantiation.

Phil.—I suppose you mean the philosophy of the mind and of common sense, which Dr. Reid in his inquiry, and Dr. Beattie in his Essay on Truth, have so clearly displayed, and so solidly established.

Orthod.—I do; and from the language of nature, which these learned gentlemen have so clearly explained, I lay down the following observations, which will serve

as so many principles in our present enquiry.

1st. The different qualities which we observe in the bodies around us, by means of our senses, to wit, their colour, smell, taste, and the like, are by no means in these bodies themselves what they are in our minds. In us they are sensations, feelings, or perceptions excited in our mind, by the mediate or immediate action of these external objects upon the organs of our senses. Thus, for example, the feeling we have of colour, is by no means in the coloured body, but is excited by the rays of light reflected from that body in a certain manner, which, striking on our eyes, excite in the mind that sensation which we call colour; and, according to the different proportions in which the rays of light are reflected to our eyes, the sensations of different colours are excited in our mind. In like manner, when we feel the sweet taste of sugar, the sweetness we feel is by no means in the sugar, but is only a perception or feeling excited in our mind by the manner in which the particles of sugar act upon our organ of taste when applied to it. And the same observation holds true in all the sensible qualities which we perceive in the bodies. around us; and may be further explained by an easy

similitude. When the point of a needle is pressed upon any part of our body, we immediately feel that uneasy sensation which we call pain. Now it is evident this pain is not in the needle, but is a feeling of our own mind caused by the needle. So when we smell a rose, the agreeable odour we feel is not in the rose, but is a sersation excited in our mind by the effluvia of the rose

when applied to our organ of smell. Hence.

2dly. In examining the objects about us we must carefully distinguish three things; first, the feelings or sensations excited in our minds, by the actions of these objects upon our organs of sense; secondly, those particular qualities or dispositions of these objects themselves, by which they are apt to excite such feelings in us; and, thirdly, the material part or substance of these objects in which those particular qualities or dispositions reside.

3dly. A little attention to what passes in our own minds will thoroughly convince us, that we are totally ignorant of the material part or substance of all the objects around us; that we are no less ignorant of the nature of all those particular qualities or dispositions of bodies by which they act upon our organs, and excite certain feelings and sensations in our mind; and that all the knowledge we naturally can have about bodies is confined to their sensible qualities alone as perceived by us. From these we argue, that there are bodily objects really existing without us, and independent of us; that they have in themselves certain qualities or dispositions of their component parts, apt to excite various sensations in us when applied to the organs of our senses; that these qualities are different in different objects, of which some are apt to excite one kind of sensations in us, and others to excite another, according to those several qualities which they possess: And that these qualities may be changed in the same object, so that it shall cease to excite the same sensations in us which it formerly did, when applied to our senses, and excite others which it did not raise before, &c.

4thly, As it is experience only that discovers to us the connection between the several bodies around us, and the corresponding sensations they excite in our mind; and as this connection is constant, we naturally conclude, that these bodies are the causes of the sensations we feel; and being ignorant of the manner in which they produce these effects,-" without enquiring farther," as Dr. Reid justly observes,-" we attribute to the cause some vague and indistinct notion of power or virtue to produce the effect. In many cases the purposes of life do not make it necessary to give distinct names to the cause and the effect; and hence it happens, that being closely connected in the imagination, though very unlike to each other, one name serves for both, which occasions an ambiguity in many words, which having the same causes in all languages, is common to all. Thus magnetism both signifies the power or virtue in the loadstone to attract the iron as a cause, and the motion in the iron towards the loadstone as an effect Heat both signifies a sensation of our mind, and a quality or state of bodies apt to excite that sensation in us. The names of all smells, tastes, sounds, as well as heat and cold, have a like ambiguity in all languages, though in common language they are rarely used to signify the sensations, but for the most part they signify the external qualities indicated by the sensations."

5thly, In like manner, this general term, 'the sensible qualities of bodies,' is ambiguous; it both signifies that particular aptitude, that power or virtue which is in bodies to excite certain sensations in our mind when applied to our organs of sense; and it also signifies these very sensations themselves. In the former sense it signifies a thing of which we have no idea, but are totally ignorant of what it consists; in the latter sense it signifies a thing with which we are thoroughly acquainted.

6thly. As we are totally ignorant of the nature of sensible qualities as residing in the objects around us, so we are equally ignorant of the manner how they excite their corresponding sensations in our mind. We

the see no reason why the rays of light variously reflected to our eyes, should excite in us the sensations of various colours, nor why the motion of the air should excite the idea of sound; or the fire, heat; or sugar sweetness, &c. By experience we know it is so, but why or how it is so, we know nothing at all; we must resolve this into the will of the Creator, who has so ordered it, and who doubtless might have ordered it otherwise if he

had thought proper.

7thly. Besides the sensations which external bodies excite in our mind by our organs of sense as the immediate objects of these organs, we find also from experience, that they produce many other sensible effects, both upon our bodies and upon one another when applied to action. Thus ipecacuanha, besides the ideas of its colour, taste, and smell which it excites in our mind by the organs of our sense, when taken into our stomach it also excites vomiting; jalap purges; opium assuages pain, and causes sleep; wine intoxicates; and so on of others. We know all such effects of different bodies only by experience; but we are totally ignorant of the manner how they produce them, or what particular quality or disposition it is in each by which it produces the effect proper to it. But as experience teaches us. that they constantly produce these effects in the same circumstances, we naturally attribute to each body a quality, power, or virtue proper to itself, and bestowed upon it by the Creator, by which it so produces them; and a)l such powers of bodies may also be included under the same general name of 'sensible qualities of bodies, because they manifest themselves to our senses by the sensible effects they produce.

8thly. If we enquire in what all these sensible qualities of bodies consist, or what is that particular disposition of each body by which it produces the effects proper to it? What it is, for example, in the ipecacuanha that makes it emetic—in the jalap that purges—in wine that inebriates, and so on? Here we must acknowledge our total ignorance, and confess that we know no

thing of the matter. If we suppose the original prime tive matter which composes the substance of all bodies to be the same in all, and that it acts mechanically, which seems to be the most universally received opinion: then we can conceive no other way by which the different qualities of different bodies can be accounted for, but by the different figure, motion, and combination of the particles of this matter used in the structure of each body. It is indeed true, that a difference in these things exceedingly alters the sensible qualities of bodies:witness the various and opposite qualities of quicksilver, according to the various changes wrought in the structure of its component parts by fire; and it seems to be the most approved opinion of philosophers, that all the vast variety of productions from the earth, is only owing to the different modifications of the texture of the same nutritive juice, according to the different plant by which it is imbibed. But whether this be the real cause, and that it holds universally in all the variety of creatures; or whether there be, in fact, different kinds of primitive matter of which different bodies are composed, and to which their different qualities are owing; or whether these qualities arise from the mechanical structure of their parts, or be the immediate effects of the divine will impressed upon different compositions of the same original matter, by way of a law; or in whatever other manner these sensible effects are brought about,of all this we are entirely ignorant.

Phil.—What you have said seems perfectly clear, and the substance of it, I think, may be summed up in a few words, thus: The sensible effects which the various bodies about us produce, either in ourselves, or in one another, are objects of our knowledge, of which we are absolutely certain, from the testimony of our senses. From these sensible effects we justly argue the real existence of those bodies that produce them; and also-that these bodies have in themselves certain qualities by which they are capable of producing such effects: But with regard to the matter or substance of the bodies

· in which these qualities reside, their nature and structure, or the nature of these qualities themselves by which the effects are produced, it is entirely hidden from our eyes. All this I easily understand, as it is extremely clear; but I do not perceive what connection all this has with transubstantiation.

Orthod.—That we shall now see, after taking a view of the matter in which we reason concerning the substance of bodies from the above observations. Let us then suppose, according to the most received opinion of the learned, that the elementary matter, or materia prima, of all bodies, is universally of the same kind throughout the whole creation; and that this vast diversity of bodily objects arises only from the different manner in which this original matter is formed in the structure and composition of these different bodies. This original matter is the common substance of all bodies; the particular structure it has in different kinds of bodies constitutes their essensial diversity, or their different natures; and it is by their sensible qualities (as perceived by us,) which flow from the particular structure of each kind, that we distinguish one kind of bodily substance from another. For example, what we properly under stand, by the substance of iron, is the elementary matter formed in such a manner as to excite in our minds that collection of sensible qualities which we perceive in iron. What we understand by the substance of bread, is a portion of the same elementary matter, so formed as to excite in our mind that other collection of sensible qualities which we perceive in bread; and so on of all ethers. Now, as it is most reasonable to suppose that the Author of Nature acts in a constant uniform manner in the ordinary course of nature, and that when the effects are entirely of the same kind, the causes producing them are of the same kind also; for this reason, when we find the same collection of sensible qualities in different individual bodies, we conclude that the substance of these bodies is of the same kind: and on the contrary, when we find the collection of sensible

qualities in one body different from those in another, we conclude their substances are of different kinds, although in reality we know nothing at all about the nature of the one substance or of the other, nor in what their difference consists. Thus, in examining a piece of iron and a bit of wood, we find the collection of the sensible qualities of the one very different from those in the other; and therefore we distinguish them as different substances, and give them different names; but when we examine two pieces of iron, or two pieces of wood by themselves, we find the sensible qualities of both the same; and therefore conclude, that their substance is also of the same kind, and we give them the same name.

The sensible qualities of bodies are the immediate and sole objects of our senses, and with regard to them our senses are the sole and absolute judges from whose ultimate sentence there is no appeal. In like manner, whatever changes happen in these sensible qualities they fall immediately under the cognizance of the senses, to which alone it belongs to give us the proper and certain information of all such changes. From such information we argue, that if any change be produced in the sensible qualities, there must also be a corresponding change in the nature of the body itself by which these effects are produced, although we are perfectly ignorant wherein this change in the cause consists. But where our senses inform us of no change in the sensible qualities there, we conclude that there is no change in the body from which these effects proceed.

Now, though it be most just and reasonable to arguein this manner, and we may safely depend upon it in all the ordinary occurrences of life, at least where we have no positive reason to suspect of error; yet it must be owned, that we see no impossibility in supposing, that Almighty God may cause two very different substances to act on us in such a manner as to affect our senses in the very same way, and thereby exhibit to us the same sensible qualities. Nay, we are so far from

seeing any impossibility in this, that we know from revelation, that in fact it has been often the case. The substance of a living man composed of a soul and body, is confessedly acknowledged to be very different from the substance of an angel, which is purely spiritual; and yet it is certain, from the word of God, that angels have often taken upon themselves all the sensible qualities of living men;—that is, have appeared as such to the eyes of those who beheld them-have spoken and conversed as such in their hearing—have taken hold of them, and wrestled with them so as to appear such to their touch—have walked, sat down, eat and drunk, and, in a word, exhibited themselves to the senses of those who beheld them, to all intents and purposes, in the same way that any real man would have done. cannot be called in question that there is an infinite distance between the bodily substance of a dove, composed of flesh and blood, and the incomprehensible substance of the divinity; and yet we know, that when our blessed Saviour was baptized in the river Jordan, the Holy Ghost, the third person of the adorable Trinity, was pleased to exhibit himself to those present under the outward appearance of a dove, affecting their sight in the same way that a real dove would have done, had it been flying above our Saviour at that time. Now, in these and other similar cases related in scripture, it is plain, that the above way of arguing, from the sameness of the sensible effects, to the sameness or similarity of the cause producing them, would not hold. be further illustrated even in natural things. How often do we see cooks, apothecaries, and brewers of wines or spirits, make up dishes, drugs, and various wines, representing so exactly what they are not, that the nicest judge, upon the strictest examination, could not distinguish them from what they represent? these cases also were we to conclude, from the sameness of the sensible qualities, that the substances of these things are really what these qualities represent, we would be deceived as well as in the former cases. Yet

in neither case would the senses be deceived; for the sensations excited in our minds by their means, perfectly correspond to the actions of these external objects made upon them; and from these sensations we conclude with absolute certainty the existence of these external objects, and that they have a power or quality of acting upon our senses, so as to excite these sensations in our mind; but with absolute certainty we can go no further.

To come now to the point, if we apply the above observations to bread and wine, we find that bread and wine have many sensible qualities, that is, a certain colour, taste, smell, &c. proper to themselves, and when examined by our senses, they excite in our minds the sensations to which we give these names, and which we call the sensible qualities, or forms, or species, or appearances of bread and wine. These we know by our senses, about these we are conversant by experience; but what the substance of bread and wine is, in which these qualities reside, or wherein that particular structure, virtue, or power consists which excites these perceptions in our mind, of this we know nothing at all: it is not in the least degree perceptible to us. Now, what the Catholics teach concerning transubstantiation, is precisely this: 1. ' that the change made is only in the material substance of the bread and wine, which is wholly imperceptible to us; that this substance of the bread and wine is entirely taken away by the power of God, and ceases to be any longer there; and that the substance of the body and blood of Christ, which is equally imperceptible to our senses, is substituted in its place, and now exists where the bread and wine existed before: But, 2. That there is no change made in any of the sensible qualities of the bread and wine; these remain entirely the same as they were; for Jesus Christ, now present instead of the bread and wine, exhibits himsel? to us under the self same appearance which the bread and wine had before the change.'

Phil.—Indeed you amaze me! is this really the doc-

trine of the Roman Catholics? This is a plain intelligible account of the matter; but, to hear Benevolus and others on this subject, you would think it were such a heap of absurdities huddled together, that even those who held it could not give any intelligible account of

what they mean by it.

Orthod.—That may very well be; perhaps those gentlemen have never taken the trouble to inform themselves what the Catholics really believe concerning it; perhaps they have read what Catholic authors write upon this subject, with the eye of prejudice and prepossession, and perhaps some of them may find it convenient to throw all the obscurity they can upon the Roman Catholic doctrine. Be that as it may, that what I have said is the precise doctrine of the Catholic church is manifest from her own words in the council of Trent, where she speaks thus: "If any one shall deny that in the sacrament of the blessed Eucharist is contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore whole Christ, but shall say that he is there only in sign, figure, or power, let him be Anathema."* "If any man shall say that in the blessed sacrament of the Eucharist, the substance of the bread and wine remains along with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the appearances of bread and wine only remaining, which conversion the Catholic church most fitly calls transubstantiation, let him be Anathema." † In these two canons three things are declared; that after consecration the body and blood of Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, where it was not before; that the substance of the bread and wine, which was there before, is no more there; and that nothing remains of what was bread and wine but the appearances only; and

[•] Sess. 13, Can. 1.

hence the council concludes, that this, being a change of the substances only, is therefore fitly called transubstantiation, which you see is the very doctrine I laid down above almost in the same terms; for if what was there before be not there now, and what was not there before be now present, then it follows that the change of the one into the other must consist in destroying or taking away the one, and substituting the other in its

place.

Phil.—I cannot say it appears to me quite so plain as yet; the words of the council rather increase my difficulties; for, as it says that the whole substance of the bread and wine is changed into the body and blood of Christ, this would seem to imply that at least the elementary matter of the bread and wine passes into the body and blood of Christ, and goes to compose its substance; and consequently, that the material part of the bread and wine is not destroyed nor taken away, but still remains and composes the very body and blood of Christ, somewhat in the same way that the elementary matter of the food we take is changed into the substance of our body, and goes to compose it and repair its daily waste.

Orthod.—Nothing is more foreign, my dear sir, to the sense of the council, and to the belief of the whole Catholic church, than what you here advance; nay, a little attention will convince you, that it is evidently repugnant to common sense to say that the elementary matter of the bread and wine passes into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and goes to compose its substance, because the body of Christ is already perfect and entire, incapable of increase or diminution in its substance, and has a real existence before consecration. Now, to say that two bodily substances numerically distinct, existing separately, and wholly independent of each other, should become identically the same, is evidently repugnant. You may say, if you will, that the material substance of the bread is joined to the body of Christ,—is added to it,—is compenetrated with it, or the like;

we do not see any impossibility in these suppositions considered in themselves, though very different from what Catholics teach; but to say that it becomes his identical body,—the same which existed before consecration at the right hand of the Father, is a palpable

absordity.

When we say the food we take is changed into the substance of our body, we mean no more than that the material particles of the food, changing the form they had in the food, and acquiring a new form by the action of our organs, but unchanged in themselves, go to supply the place of other material particles of our body, which are daily consumed and sent off by the usual secretions; or, being added to what is there before, serve to increase our bulk and stature; but it would be highly ridiculous to suppose that either of these, or any such change, could happen to the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

Besides, Catholics believe that it is the self-same identical body of Christ, which is at the right-hand of the Father in heaven, that is also present in the Eucharist. Now, if the material substance of the bread be supposed to remain at all, and to enter into the composition of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, either by incorporation, or compenetration, or whatever other way you can imagine; it will no longer be the self-same glorious body which is at the right-hand of the Father, but one very different, a new compound made up of the pre-existing body of Christ, which is already perfect and entire, and this additional matter of the bread which now enters into its composition; which is ridiculous in itself to suppose, and directly contrary to the express belief of the Catholic church.

If, therefore, you suppose that the material substance of the bread and wine be not entirely destroyed, and does not wholly cease to be there after consecration, you must say that it remains along with the body and blood of Christ; and this is the very thing which the council condemns and anathematizes in the canon above

cited. It therefore plainly appears, that by the conversion of the whole substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the council means nothing else but that the substance of the bread and wine is, by the almighty power of God, instantaneously taken away, and ceases any longer to be there, and that the body and blood of Christ is by the same almighty power, and in the same instant of time, placed there in its stead, the presence of this last, by virtue of the words of consecration, necessarily implying the absence of the former.

This will appear still further from the catechism of this council, composed and published by its order for the use of those who have the charge of souls. In the second part, upon the Eucharist, No. XXV., explaining the effects of consecration, it says, "The Catholic faith, without all hesitation, believes and confesses that there are three most admirable and surprising things performed by the words of consecration in this sacrament; the first, That the true body of our Lord Jesus Christ, that very same which was born of the Virgin, and sits at the right-hand of the Father in heaven, is contained in this sacrament: The second, That no part of the substance of the elements remains in it: The third, That the accidents, which are perceived by our senses, are still there, in a wonderful and inexplicable manner without any subject; because (it immediately adds) the substance of the bread and wine is so changed into the very body and blood of our Lord, that the substance of the bread and wine entirely ceases to be"* A little after the second of these effects is more fully considered, and both reason and authority brought to prove that no part of the substance of the bread and wine remains after consecration: And No. XXXIX., it is declared that this wonderful change is performed without any manner of change in Christ, "because he is neither generated, nor changed, nor increases, but remains whole in his own

^{*}Cum panis et vini substantia in ipsum Domini corpus et sanguinem ita mutetur, ut panis et vini substantia, omnino esse definat.

substance;" Neque enim Christus aut generatur, aut mutatur, aut augescit, sed in sua substantia totus permanet.

From these passages the explication I have given of the doctrine of the council is clear and evident; for if Jesus Christ, the self-same who is at the right hand of the Father in heaven, be, after consecration, present in this sacrament, where he was not before; if he suffers no alteration in himself, is neither generated, nor changed, nor increases, but remains whole in his own substance: If no part of the substance of the bread and wine remains, but entirely ceases any longer to be; it necessarily follows, that the change of substance declared by the council can mean nothing else but that the substance of the bread and wine ceases to exist, and that the substance of the body and blood of Christ succeeds in its place.

Phil.—I am now thoroughly satisfied as to the sense of the council, which you have made perfectly plain; nay, the above declaration that, in this sacrament, Christ is neither changed nor increases, but remains whole in his own substance, necessarily implies the explication you have given, for it is plainly impossible that this should be true if the material substance of the bread be supposed in any way imaginable to be any longer there. But pray is this the way it is explained by the divines

of the Catholic church?

Orthod.—By all of them without exception: nay, according to their principles, it is impossible they should differ on any of the three points above mentioned, because they are taught among them, not as school opinions, but as dogmas of faith, as truths revealed by God, and declared to be so by his church, as being essentially included in the words of the institution. You see how the catechism of the council above cited, expressly declares, that the Catholic faith, without hesitation, believes and teaches these three most admirable things, &c.—Other divines speak in the same manner; I shall add a few of the most celebrated for your further satisfaction.

I begin with the learned Cardinal Bellarmine, whose authority is above all exception in delivering the true doctrine of his church, and his controversial works are justly esteemed a standard on these subjects. The third book of his treatise on the Eucharist is entirely on the real presence and transubstantiation. In the eleventh and following chapters he refutes the various errors that had appeared about this last point, and among the rest, rejects as heretical the opinion of Durandus, who taught the very same thing you propose, that the elementary matter of the bread remained in the Eucharist after consecration, and became the matter of the body of Christ; which is an evident proof how widely different such an opinion is from the faith of the Roman Catholics. In the eighteenth chapter he explains the doctrine of the church in opposition to all these errors, and does it by showing what is meant, when we say that one thing is changed into another. To this, he says, these three conditions are required; first, that the thing changed ceases to exist; for it is unintelligible to say that one thing is changed into another, unless that which is changed ceases to be what it was before; secondly, that something succeed in the place of that which now ceases to be, otherwise it would not be a conversion, but a corruption or annihilation; thirdly, that there be a mutual connection or dependence between the destruction of the one and the succession of the other, so that the one necessarily implies the other.* Now, as transubstantiation is a

^{*} This third condition is particularly to be observed. Every change of whatever kind it be, whether of the thing itself or of its mode or quality, necessarily supposes the absence of one thing, mode or quality, and the presence of another; and this is essential to the nature of every change. But there is not in every change a mutual dependence between the presence of the one and the absence of the other; so that the one necessarily follows or pre-supposes the other in one and the same action. A man truly changes his coat when he puts off one and puts on another; but he does that by two separate actions, done at different times, and quite independent of one another. In cases of this kind we cannot say there is a change of one thing into another; as we cannot say this man changes the coat he puts off into the one he puts on. To verify this expression it is requisite that the change be made at the very same in-

change not of the accidents or appearances of the bread and wine,—which are confessed to remain unchanged, but of the whole material substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; according to these conditions, by this change nothing else can be understood but that the substance of the bread and wine ceases to exist, and that the body and blood of Christ succeed in its place; and this, his Eminence observes, is a perfect conversion of the one substance into the other; because the body and blood of Christ, being now present in virtue of the words of consecration, to verify these sacred words necessarily excludes the presence of the substance of the bread and wine; which therefore, by the Almighty power of God, ceases to be where it was before, at the same instant and by the same action by which the body and blood of Christ exists there. He further observes, that this singular conversion differs from all other changes that we know of, whether natural or super-natural, in these two points; first, because in all other changes, it is probable that the elementary matter remains, "in utroque ter-mino," both after and before the change; * but in tran-

must necessarily imply the absence of the other; as when we say, light is changed into darkness, heat into cold, or the like; wherein the very same moment that darkness and cold appear, light and heat cease; and the presence of the one necessarily implies the absence of the other.

* I find however, several who are of opinion that in some, at least, of the supernatural changes related in the Scriptures, such as the turning of Moses' rod into a serpent, there was a total change both of the material substance of the rod, and of its form, there being an instantaneous destruction of the one, and production of the other; and this opinion is followed above, under the Criterion, where this example, among other such, is brought as an instance of a miracle proper to the almighty power of God alone. The real truth seems to be, that without a revelation it is impossible to know for certain, whether the material substance be destroyed in these supernatural conversions, or is only transformed as to its structure and composition; though the turning a dry rod into a living creature, doubtless requires a great deal more than such a change of structure. If the original elementary matter be of different kinds in different creatures, then a change of one creature into another, must imply a change of the elementary matter itself; if this be homogeneal throughout the whole creation, then it seems sufficient, at least for all natural changes of one thing into another, that there be a change of form and structure only. Instantaneous changes of either kind evi-Vol. II--21*

substantiation, 'certum est (says he) materiam primam non manere;' "it is certain that the elementary matter does not remain;" secondly, because in these other conversions, either all or some of the sensible qualities are changed, but in transubstantiation all the sensible qualities remain as they were before, the material substance alone being changed here. This is the explication given of this mystery by this celebrated cardinal; and in the remaining chapters he repeats and inculcates the same as occasion requires, both in his proofs and in answering objections. From this it appears, that whereas in all the natural conversions of one thing into another that we know of the change is only made in the form or sensible qualities of the object, whilst its material substance remains unchanged, just the reverse happens in transubstantiation; the change is made in the material substance, whilst the form or sensible qualities remain perfectly the same. And as in other conversions the change made in the sensible qualities consist precisely in this. that the former sensible qualities are destroyed, and at the same instant other sensible qualities are introduced in their place, the material substance remaining common to both; so in transubstantiation the change made in the substance consists precisely in this, that the substance of the bread is destroyed, and at the same instant the body of Christ succeeds in its place, whilst the sensible qualities remain in both the same.

The next authority I bring is that of Tournely, a

dently show the finger of God, especially when any thing inanimate is changed into a living creature, which implies a new creation of life; and hence what the magicians of Egypt did could not be a real change of their rods into serpents, as we know it was the work not of God but of the devil, to whom such a power cannot belong. It may be accounted for by fascination, or we may conceive that some of the evil spirits by their great agility removed the rods so quickly as to be imperceptible to those present, whilst others, with equal celerity, substituted real serpents in their place; nor can this seem any way improbable, as we see among ourselves many similar and surprising examples done by jugglers from their great dexterity in sleight of hand. But this was on more changing rods into serpents, than it is changing one coat into another, when we put off one, and put another on. See the preceeding note.

celebrated French divine of the last century, who in his theological lectures upon the Eucharist, after refuting the various errors about transubstantiation, explaining the sense of the church concerning it, says, "The substance of the bread and wine do not cease by a mere suspension of the divine conservation, but by a positive action, to wit, consecration, by which the body of Christ becomes present, the substance of bread and wine rece-

ding." *

In the judicious and pious exposition of the creed of Pope Pius, published at Paris in the year 1768, with an epitome of the general controversies of the two learned bishops and brothers, Adrian and Peter of Wallemburg, the article of the real presence and transubstantiation is thus declared. "We believe, according to the truth of the words of Christ, who says, This is my body, that in the blessed Eucharist his body is present by transubstantiation. For as Christ, after he took bread, verily pronounced what he offered under the outward appearances, to be his body, and as his words could not mean the substance of the bread and wine, as is evident, nor even his own natural body, if the substance of the bread and wine remained under their proper accidents, it necessarily follows, that the substance of the bread ceases to be, and the substance of his body alone remains under these accidents." †

To these celebrated authors I shall add a more recent one, Monsieur de Reval, in his Philosophical Catechism against the Deists, published at Liege and Brussels in the year 1773. He begins the article on the Eucharist by this question, "To deny the possibility of the real presence, is it not to deny the power of God?" To which he gives this plain and simple answer. "It is an absolute denial of it, for it is refusing to God the power of destroying a bit of bread, and of concealing a human

^{*} Qua (consecratione) perfecta corpus Christi sit presens recedente panis et vini substantia. Tournely de Euchar.

[†] Necessario fieri debuit ut substantia panis desinaret, et sola substantia corporis sub illis accidentibus remaneret.

body under its appearances."* These few plain testimonies of such celebrated and standard authors, among innumerable others, are more than sufficient to show you what is the real sense of Catholic divines on this subject.

Phil.—They are so indeed; nor can the matter in my opinion admit of the smallest doubt. But, pray, is not this way of understanding the expression conversion or change of one thing into another, contrary to the com-

mon acceptation of it among mankind?

Orthod.—Very far from it. On the contrary, a little attention will convince you, that this is the constant and universally received meaning of it. For I might defy you to show me one example, where the precise object. changed is ever supposed to pass into, or compose that into which it is changed; but in every case we are always persuaded that the object changed ceases to exist, and that another comes into its place, but in such a manner that the presence of the one and the absence of the other always imply one another. Thus, when we say that light is turned into darkness, does it ever enter into our head that the light remains after the change, and enters into the composition of darkness? Never; all we mean is, that the light ceases to exist, and the darkness comes into its place; but in such a manner, that the presence of the darkness necessarily implies the absence of the light. When we say heat is turned into cold, we never dream that the heat remains after the change, and goes to compose the cold; whoever should say so would be laughed at as a fool. But the plain meaning is that the heat entirely ceases, and is banished by its opposite cold supervening in its stead. In like manner, when we say a sinner is changed into a Saint, do we ever imagine that his former impiety and guilt remain after his conversion, and enter into the composition of his sanctity? By no means; but we undersand

^{*} C'est la nier absolument, puisque c'est refuser a Dieu le pouvoir de detruire un morceau de pain, et de cacher un corps humain sous ses apparances.

by that expression, that his impiety and guilt are quite taken away by the grace of God which succeeds in their stead. Examples of this kind are without end; but to make it still more palpable, I shall consider the above expression a little more minutely when applied to compound objects. In these it commonly happens, that the precise object changed, is only one part of the compound, but as the change of one part alters the condition of the whole, we therefore in common language say, that the compound object itself is changed. In all bodies around us we may consider two parts in which a change may be made,—the material substance of which any body is composed, and the sensible qualities by which we distinguish it from all other bodies. In all the natural conversions of one body into another, with which we are acquainted, nothing more is required than that the change take place in the rensible qualities, whilst the material substance remains the same both before and after the change; but this is enough for us to affirm that the one is changed into the other. Thus we say that quicksilver, by one kind of chemical operation, is changed into sweet mercury; by another into red precipitate; by another into Turbith mineral, and so on; all which exceedingly differ from one another in all their sensible qualities, and in the effects produced by them. Yet all these changes happen only in the structure and composition of the component particles of the quicksilver, whilst the material substance itself remains the same in all its various preparations, and may, by a counter operation, be brought back to the form of quicksilver again. Still, though the material substance remains the same, we justly say, that the compound object itself, the quicksilver, is changed into these different preparations. In like manner, when we say the food we take is changed into flesh and blood, we do not mean that the material substance of the food is altered or changed in its own nature, but only that the structure it had in the composition of the food, and the sensible qualities which resulted from that structure, are by the action of our organs, altered and changed; so

hat the same elementary matter which was in the food is now composed in the form of our flesh and blood, and exhibits the sensible qualities of flesh and blood to our view. So also we say, that the nutritive juice of the earth is changed into all the vast variety of plants which compose the vegetable world; but the meaning of that expression is, that the same particles of matter which composed the nutritive juice being imbibed and assimilated by the different plants, change the form and structure, and all the sensible qualities they had in the juice into another form and other qualities, quite different from the former, according to the nature of the plant which imbibes them, the original matter being still the same both in the juice and in the plant. Now, if we examine attentively what it is in which all these changes of the forms or sensible qualities consist, we shall easily perceive that it consists precisely in this, that the form and sensible qualities which the elementary matter had in the quicksilver, in the food, and in the nutritive juice, are destroyed, and cease any longer to be; and at the same time another form, and other sensible qualities are substituted in their place, whilst the material substance which receives this new form remains unchanged, the common subject both of the form destroyed and the form received. In transubstantiation, no change is made in the appearances or sensible qualities of the bread and wine, these remaining perfectly the same after the change as they were before; the change takes place in the material substance alone. As, therefore, the change of these qualities in the former cases implies nothing more than the destruction or extinction of one form, or one set of sensible qualities, and the substitution of others in their place; so in transubstantiation the change of substances can imply no more than the destruction or extinction of one substance, and the putting another in its And as the above and other such natural changes are fitly called transformations, because they are only changes of the forms or sensible qualities, the same substances remaining; so this other is most fitly called

transubstantiation, because it is only a change of the substance, whilst the forms or sensible qualities continue

as they were.

Phil.—Sir, I am now thoroughly satisfied with what you have said, and think I have a clear and distinct idea of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation; far different indeed from what I ever had before. But permit me to ask you one question more: as they hold that the material substance of the bread is no longer there, what do they say becomes of it? In what manner does it cease to be?

Orthod.—The answer to this question will show you a very important maxim, by which the Roman Catholics regulate themselves in matters of religion. Whatever articles they hold as truths revealed by God, these they adhere to with the most invariable attachment; there are no different opinions among them concerning such points; they are not looked upon as matter of opinion, but as absolute truths declared by the infinite veracity of God who reveals them. Hence they are taught and believed the same way by all the members of that church throughout the whole world, who being perfectly convinced of their truth, make bold and open profession of them. Of this kind are the three points above mentioned concerning transubstantiation, viz., that Jesus Christ, God and man, who died on the cross, and is now glorious at the right hand of the Father in heaven, is truly, really and substantially present in the blessed Eucharist. That no part of the material substance of the bread and wine remains there, but is wholly changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; and that Jesus Christ presents himself to us in that holy mystery, under all the outward appearances of the bread and wine, which remain in every respect the same as they were before consecration. These, therefore, they boldly declare, profess and believe, at all times, and on all occasions. But besides points of faith or revealed truths, there are many other things that may be inquired into concerning religious matters which have not been declared as

revealed by God. With regard to these points, Catholic divines form such judgments and opinions as appears to each most reasonable, according to his own sense of the matter; and they are at full liberty to adopt any opinion they please concerning such questions, provided the opinion they embrace does not clash with, or contradict any revealed truth. Of this kind are the questions you have just now proposed. If you ask the Catholic church what becomes of the substance of the bread and wine? how it is destroyed? in what manner it ceases to be? she will answer you plainly, that these are not matters of faith, but of opinion,—and for this plain reason, because God Almighty has not thought proper to reveal it to her. The subject is too abstruse for human eyes to penetrate; it is absolutely impossible to know it except God should discover it; and since he has not done so, she leaves such questions undecided. Her divines indeed say, that we may conceive the substance of the bread and wine to be taken away by an improper kind of annihilation, or rather destruction, or by dissolution, or by simple removal, or by numberless other ways easy to an Almighty Power, though inconceivable to us; but all than can be said upon this is little better than human conjectures and mere opinion, of which nothing can be determined for certain, because the subject matter is beyond the sphere of our knowledge, and we have no proper data on which to found any reasonings concerning it.

Phil.—Sir, this piece of intelligence gives me particular satisfaction, and conveys a more exalted idea of the Roman Catholic religion to the mind, than any thing I had hitherto imagined. I see the main point with them is to preserve inviolate the sacred truths which God has revealed, or, as St. Jude expresses it, to contend earnestly for the faith which has been once delivered to the saints. This is a fixed point with them, in which I find they never vary; but they give themselves little concern in inquiring after the why or the how these things are so; about these it is impossible the mind of man should.

its own strength, arrive at any certain knowledge in this mortal state; and therefore inquiries of this kind make no part of their creed, but they esteem them, as they certainly are, rather as matter of curiosity, than utility.

Orthod.—And a matter of very dangerous curiosity too, as the experience of numbers can attest. Wherefore, letting that alone, I shall now show you some obvious consequences that flow from the above explication of transubstantiation, which will still more fully clear up this matter, and at once remove some of the principal and most specious objections of Benevolus and others

against it.

- 1. It is evident from what we have seen, that transubstantiation is not impossible to Almighty God: We see no repugnance, no contradiction in what is taught about it. It cannot be called in question, that Almighty God is able to change the material substance of one body into another when he pleases, by removing or destroying the one in an instant, and substituting the other in its place. We see many examples in the sacred scripture of sensible changes of this kind wrought instantaneously by the divine power, as of a rod turned into a serpent, water into blood, and water into wine; and surely, if the Creator could give being and existence to what was not, he can with equal ease change the being and existence of what is. Again, from the examples we have seen above, both in natural and supernatural things, of different objects being explited to our senses under sensible qualities, not their own, it is evidently not impossible, but perfectly easy for Jesus Christ, to exhibit himself to us under whatever sensible qualities he pleases; consequently it is not impossible for him to take upon him those of bread and wine; and therefore, there is no impossibility in the doctrine of transubstantiation, as believed and taught by Roman Catholics.
- 2. It is also manifest, that as this doctrine of transubstantiation is possible, if we suppose it true, and that Almighty God actually performs it, it may justly be Vol. II.—22

enjoined by revelation as an object of divine faith. To understand this you must call to mind, that faith is the belief of any truth revealed by God, merely because God reveals it. I say merely, because if either our senses or our reason convince us of the truth of any thing revealed by God, our belief is no longer pure divine faith, but rather knowledge. St. Paul tells us. that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;"* and that it is "the evidence of things not seen,"† that is, the conviction and firm belief we have of things that do not appear to us from any other source of knowledge but from divine revel tion alone : and our blessed Saviour declares, that the whole merit of faith consists in believing merely because God reveals it. though we neither see nor understand it; "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; plessed are they who have not seen and vet have believed," And hence, supernatural truths that neither fall under our senses, nor can be discovered by reason, are alone the immediate and proper objects of revelation and of faith. The change wrought in transubstantiation is entirely of this kind; it does not fall under our senses, the substances in which it is made being altogether imperceptible to us; and if we suppose it true, it is impossible either our senses or reason should ever discover it to us, nor could we ever come to the knowledge of it any other way than by revelation from God. If, therefore, he should declare it to us, it immediately becomes a most proper object of faith as much as any other supernatural truth revealed in the Christian religion.

3. It is no less evident, that if it be so revealed, its revelation, and consequently its reality and truth, may be proved to conviction by miracles as well as any other article of Christian faith: for it is a truth which neither falls under the examination of our senses, nor can possibly be known by reason; it is a fact entirely depending apon the free will of God, to do it or not to do it as he

[•] Rom, x. 17.

pleases. Hence then it is evident, that our senses and reason are by no means judges of it, nor any way concerned in it. All that is necessary to convince us of its reality is to know for certain that God declares it is so. But what greater proof can we have that God declares any truth to man, than a miracle proper to God, wrought in his name, on purpose to prove it? Therefore, such a miracle wrought in attestation of transubstantiation, must be the most convincing proof that God declares it,

and consequently that it is true.

4. Hence you will clearly perceive the childish fallacy of the first argument used by Benevolus against believing transubstantiation, though attested by a miracle: His words, as you mentioned above, are these: "Because there is the same evidence against that doctrine that there can be for the truth of any miracle; I mean the testimony of the human senses, and so one cannot rationally believe the one without disbelieving the other: For if I believe my senses, I cannot believe transubstantiation; and if I disbelieve my senses, I could not believe the truth of your miracle." Is it not evident, that Benevolus knows nothing about the real Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation when he argues in this manner?

Phil.—I must own it is impossible to excuse him; for it is plain from what you have said, that the change wrought in transubstantiation is totally imperceptible to our senses, which are altogether unconcerned in the belief or disbelief of it, and neither give evidence for nor against it: Whereas, the change wrought by any miracle performed in attestation of any doctrine, must be a sensible change, necessarily falling under our senses, and subjected to their examination: It is therefore most ridiculous to pretend, that there is the same evidence against transubstantiation that there is for the truth of any miracle; and I think it clear as noon-day, that the very reverse of what Benevolus asserts is most certainly true; "for I may rationally believe transubstantiation with out disbelieving my senses, and may be

certain from my senses of the reality of the miracle, without injuring them in the smallest degree by believ-

ing transubstantiation."

Orthod.—I see you thoroughly comprehend what I have said, and the consequence you draw from it is most just; for surely no man of common sense who understands the real Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, would ever expose himself by making such a childish argument against it as Benevolus does; and the only excuse I can give for Benevolus and Dr. Tillotson, from whom he takes it, is, that both the one and the other must have assumed the Catholic doctrine upon trust, without giving themselves the trouble to inquire what it really is. This will further appear from the last consequence which flows from the above explication of this doctrine, with no less evidence than those already mentioned. For,

5. It is plain that our senses are by no means deceived in our belief of this mystery. This will easily appear, if we consider, that, before the change, our senses represented to us the appearances of bread and wine, because they were really there; and therefore our senses were not then deceived: but they told us nothing of the nature of the substance of bread and wine which exhibited these appearances, because that was quite imperceptible to them. We indeed, arguing from the uniformity of the works of the Creator, judged from the appearances that the substance of bread and wine was there; but this was the judgment of reason, not the information of our senses. On the other hand, after consecration our senses represent to us the very same appearances of bread and wine as before, and for the self-same reason, because these appearances are still there; consequently our senses are no more deceived now than in the former case; for in both cases what they represent to us is entirely conformable to the truth; but as regards the substance of the body and blocd of Christ, which after consecration is presented to us under these appearances, our senses can tell us no more about

it than they could, before consecration, tell us of the substance of the bread and wine. If we had nothing else to guide our reason after consecration than we had before, our judgment in both cases would be the same, viz., that as the same appearances of bread and wine continue, so the same substances of bread and wine continue also. But being convinced that God Almighty has declared, that by consecration the substance of the bread and wine is no longer there, but changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, as we must confess this change is possible for him, and as, in the supposition of its being true, we could never come to know it but by his revealing it, since he actually declares it, we readily give up the judgment of reason, which we know in this case is only a judgment of congruency, but far from being of absolute certainty,—and firmly believe that what God says is true; yet in doing this, it is evident that our senses are as far from being deceived now as they were before consecration; for then they told u what was really there, viz., the appearances of bread and wine, and now they tell us they perceive the same appearances, and the same appearances are still there as before. Observe once more, if our faith told us that the sacred host was red, and our eyes saw it white-that it was bitter, and our taste felt it sweet, &c., then indeed, our faith and senses would be opposite to one another, and, if our faith was true, our senses must be deceived But as the case stands, our faith and senses go hand in hand in every thing in which the senses are concerned; and therefore, though our faith be most true, yet our senses are by no means deceived. And hence again it follows as a necessary consequence, that we may rationally believe transubstantiation without disbelieving our senses, which overthrows the foundation upon which the whole argument of Benevolus is founded.

Phil.—What you say admits in my opinion of no reply; for it is evident that the object of our faith in believing transubstantiation, and the object of our senses when a miracle is wrought before us, are of quite differ-

ent kinds; the former is an act of the omnipotence of God produced in a subject which is altogether imperceptible to us, where no sensible effect appears, nor any change is made in the sensible qualities; the latter is a sensible effect produced by the same Almighty Power, but in the sensible qualities of the objects around us; the former can be known by the sense of hearing only, informed by the word of God; the latter can be known by the other senses of sight and touch, is the proper object of these senses, and naturally falls under their examination. It is therefore as ridiculous to deny transubstantiation,—which can be known only by hearing, because my sight and touch do not inform me of it,—as it would be to deny that sugar is sweet because I do not

see that sweet taste with my eyes.

Orthod.—Your remark is very just, and is equally applicable to all supernatural revealed truths; they are all above our reason; they fall not under the examination of our other senses, and can be known "by the nearing only," as St. Paul expressly declares; and therefore it is altogether unphilosophical to argue against them either from sense or reason. If they be revealed by God, that is sufficient, and ought to silence every objection; and if the proofs of their revelation be the same as for the other truths of Christianity, no apparent contradiction can be urged as an argument against any one of them, without sapping the foundation of all the rest. This observation leads us to the second argument alleged by Benevolus against the belief of transubstantiation, though attested by a miracle, namely, he thinks this doctrine involves many contradictions in it. This argument is not new, any more than the former; it has been often urged against the Catholics, and as often refuted by them; but as you said that Benevo-lus mentions some of these contradictions which he attributes to transubstantiation, I shall be glad to hear what seems the most weighty to him.

Phil.—I shall show you that in his own words our blessed Saviour (says he) having consecrated the

holy Eucharist before his death, when his natural body was unglorified, and in the same state with that of other men, if transubstantiation be true, the one body of Christ behoved to be endued with opposite qualities at the same time, that is, with the qualities of ordinary flesh and blood in his living body with which he spoke and acted, and with the qualities of a glorified body in the blessed sacrament, which he had just then consecrated: Or, ir. other words, our Saviour's one body was mortal, perishing, and corruptible flesh and blood in his natural person, and was an immortal, incorruptible impassible, and spiritual body in the holy Eucharist lying before him. Now, as mortal and immortal, corruptible and incorruptible, passible and impassible, are qualities diametrically opposite, it is as impossible they can be the properties of one and the same body at the same time, as it is impossible for a thing to be and not to be at the same time; consequently the doctrine of transubstantiation must be false."* This is his great argument, in which he seems to place particular confidence as altogether unanswerable.

Orthod.—I am surprised he did not add two other arguments of the same kind no less specious than this, to wit, that if this doctrine be true, the one body of Christ must be in thousands of places at one and the same time; and the whole living body of a man must be contained in the small space of a consecrated host; yea, in every visible point of it, both which seems no

less impossible than the other.

Phil.—I know these also are brought against this tenet, and I have seen some other letters of Benevolus, in which he condemns the assertion that a body can be in different places at once as the highest absurdity; but I suppose he thought the former so unanswerable, that he had no need of any other assistance against Eusebius. I shall however be glad to hear what can be said to all

^{*} The dispute between Eusebius and Benevolus is a real fact which happened not ten years ago.—Note to Dublin edition, 1789.

the three, which I take to be the principal heads of all

that is alleged from reason against this doctrine.

Orthod.—They are so; and I shall now endeavour to satisfy you thoroughly about them. But first I must observe, that none of these apparent contradictions alleged against transubstantiation are more opposite to the light of reason than what we believe about the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation. That there should be three persons in the Godhead; that these should be really distinct, so that we can with truth affirm of the one what we cannot say of the others; and yet that all three should be but one and the self-same God, are mysteries that give a shock to human reason, and seem directly contrary to all its lights. Again, that this divine, uncreated, self-existent nature should be so intimately united with the created, finite, and mortal nature of man; that both these opposite natures should exist in one and the same person; and that in consequence of this union God should truly suffer and die, is so opposite to all the ideas of human reason, that it was a scandal to the Jews, and a stumbling-block to the Gentiles, and is to this day a matter of ridicule to Free-thinkers and Deists. Now Benevolus believes these truths not withstanding the apparent absurdities they seem to involve; nor does he think these absurdities of any weight against the revelation of these mysteries in the holy scriptures; vet the doctrine of transubstantiation is much more clearly and expressly revealed in scripture than the Trinity or Incarnation: How unreasonable then is it to believe them, though less clearly revealed, notwithstanding the apparent contradictions they contain, and refuse to believe the other, though so plainly revealed, merely because it contains some apparent contradictions?

Phil.—What you say would be unanswerable, if the contradictions in each case were only apparent; but Benevolus affirms the contrary, and that therefore the case is widely different; his words are these: "The argument which I have charged home against transubstantiation is, that it involves in its bosom the plainest and

nost self-evident contradictions; but with respect to the Holy Trinity, our ignorance is an effectual bar against the possibility of proving it to be an absurdity, and therefore no parallel can be fairly drawn between the Trinity and Unity of God and transubstantiation." That is, as I apprehend it, the contradictions contained in transubstantiation are self-evident and real; those in the Trinity are only apparent, owing to our ignorance of the intermediate links of the chain by which the whole is connected.

Orthod.—That is certainly his meaning; but do you not see one great objection to this too bold assertion? If a contradiction be self-evident, and therefore real, it must certainly appear so to every man of common sense that looks on it. Was there ever a man, but one degree above an idiot, who did not see a contradiction at first. sight, in affirming, for example, that two and two make ten? And yet there have been thousands and thousands upon the face of the earth, and are at this day men eminent for their good sense, learning and piety, who cannot see the smallest contradiction in transubstantiation, but firmly believe it as a divine truth: Either then we must say, that all these were absolute idiots who could not perceive the plainest and most self-evident contradiction: or we must conclude, that these pretended contradictions are neither so plain nor selfevident as Benevolus affirms with such presumptuous assurance.

Phil.—For my own share, I agree entirely with this last part of your conclusion; but Benevolus is so deeply prepossessed with his own notion, that he makes no difficulty to affirm, that whoever believes transubstantiation is fitter to be sent to the physicians than to be reasoned with.

Orthod.—That I am not surprised at; for there are such ardent spirits to be found in the world; however, truth, when opposed by such, will suffer very little in the end, because their ardour generally carries them beyond the mark, which always ends in the triumph of

the truth, and in their confusion. But, pray, does he add nothing farther to show the disparity he appeals to?

Phil.—Yes, yes, he says a great deal to explain and illustrate it. "An absurdity, (says he) is an opposition between two known ideas or things; and therefore, when we have no knowledge of the nature of the things about which we speak, it is impossible to prove that there is any contradiction between them, even though there really should be one. To explain myself;—as I have a distinct idea of what a human body is, and also know what it is to be liable to death and corruption, and what it is not to be liable to death and corruption; a can therefore say with certainty, that one and the same body cannot be mortal and immortal, corruptible and incorruptible, at the same time, because these are opposite modes of existence. But as I have no idea of what the divine nature is, nor any idea of what a divine person is, I cannot therefore perceive any opposition or contradiction between the subsistence of three divine persons in one and the same divine nature. Were the nature of God the same with the nature of man, and a divine person like a human person, the doctrine of the Trinity would indeed be as absurd, and therefore as incredible as transubstantiation; but as these natures and persons are infinitely different, therefore no argument can be formed from the one to the other, and of consequence the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, however incomprehensible to human reason, yet cannot be shown to be contradictory to it. That the nature of God should be incomprehensible to human reason, needs be no wonder: It not only may, but must be so; because a finite nature can never comprehend an infinite. But though the doctrine of the Holy Trinity be thus above reason, and as such may justly be enjoined by revela-tion as matter of our belief; because nothing is more reasonable than to believe upon the testimony of God what is above our reason; yet transubstantiation, which is not, properly speaking, above, but plainly contrary to reason, cannot be revealed by God, and therefore

*ught not to be believed." This is the whole of his reasoning at large, as delivered by himself in his letter; to Eusebius.

Orthod.—In this long citation from Benevolus, and in the former one to which this is a sequel, there are several expressions which, I fear, would not stand the examination of sound theology; but this I shall pass over as not strictly connected with our present subject, and shall willingly give him all the praise he deserves for several solid truths and just principles which he has here laid down or supposed, and in which I most heartily agree with him. They are as follows: 1. That an absurdity is an opposition between two known ideas or things. 2. That when we have no knowledge of the nature of the things about which we speak, it is impossible to prove there is any contradiction between them. 3. That we may be certain of the truth of any proposition, though we have no knowledge of the nature of the things or terms which compose it, as is the case with the Holy Trinity. 4. That a proposition is then said to be above reason when it is true in itself, but we do not see the connection between its terms, by reason of our ignorance of their natures and properties. 5. That a proposition is then against reason, or contrary to reason, when we have a clear and distinct idea of the nature and properties of its terms, and plainly see the opposition or repugnance between them. Upon these solid grounds Benevolus justly defends the mystery of the blessed Trinity from all imputation of absurdity or contradiction, which can never be proved to be in that mystery, for this plain reason, because we have no idea of what the divine nature is, or of what a divine person is; nor indeed can we possibly have a clear and comprehensive idea of these objects or their properties in our present state. Upon the same grounds he pretends to prove, that transubstantiation involves contradictions in its very bosom, and is therefore absurd and false; which, according to the above principles in which we both agree, necessarily supposes, that we have a clear

and distinct knowledge of the nature and properties of its objects. The whole of what he says, then, depends upon the truth of this supposition, and I am very willing to rest the issue of the cause upon it.

Phil.—This is very fair indeed; but pray have we not a clear and distinct knowledge of a human body? and was not the humanity of Jesus Christ like unto us

in all things, sin only excepted?

Orthod.—Our knowledge of the nature of the human body, my dear sir, is exceedingly imperfect, as indeed it is of the nature of all the bodies around us; our knowledge of the nature of the humanity of Jesus Christ is vastly more so, and still more are we ignorant of the objects of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Call to mind the explication given above from the Council of Trent of that mystery, to wit, that "the substance of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the outward ap pearances of bread and wine remaining unchanged." Now, has Benevolus a clear and distinct knowledge of the substance of bread and wine? does he see clearly what is possible or impossible to be done with it by the Almighty Power of the Creator? has he a clear and distinct knowledge of the substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ? does he know every thing of which it is capable or incapable? does he comprehend fully the nature and properties of the humanity of Jesus Christ? of that sacred humanity which is hypostatically united with the divine nature in one person? does he clearly understand all that was possible or impossible for this human nature so united with the divinity to do, even in its mortal state? does he see all that it is capable or incapable of doing, now that it is glorified at the right hand of the Father? And yet all this ought to be known, and to be known as clearly as we know what two is, and what ten is, before we could prudently pronounce truly that transubstantiation involves in its bosom the plainest and most selfevident contradiction. It is evident then that the obpects of transubstantiation are far above the reach of our understanding, being the interior substance of bread and wine, which is wholly imperceptible to us, and the glorified body of Jesus Christ, intimately and incomprehensibly united in one person with the divinity; these we certainly can never comprehend, nor in any degree understand in our present moral state; consequently, according to Benevolus's own principles, it is impossible to prove a contradiction in what is affirmed about them; therefore transubstantiation may be true for any thing we know, and if true (to use Benevolus's own words,) though incomprehensible to human reason, yet cannot be shown to be contrary to it; it is above reason, and as such may justly be enjoined by revelation as a matter of our belief, because nothing is more reasonable than to believe upon the testimony of God what is above our And thus you see, that upon the very principles adopted by Benevolus, the mystery of the Trinity and of transubstantiation, and indeed all supernatural truths proposed to our belief by revelation, must stand or fall together. Their objects are all hid from our eyes; we have but a very imperfect knowledge, if any at all, of their natures and properties; what revelation proposes to us concerning them we could never have had any idea of, had it not been revealed to us; and therefore objections raised against any of them from reason or the senses, either must affect all revealed truths or none at all, for they are all upon the same bottom, and must stand or fall together.

Phil.—From this clear and strong reasoning I plainly perceive where Benevolus's mistake lies, and the only excuse I can allege for him is, what you mentioned above, that he certainly has never understood the real Catholic doctrine of transubstantion, otherwise he never would have exposed himself as he does, by arguing so violently against it, upon a supposition that he has a distinct idea of the objects of that doctrine, which he certainly has not, and without which the whole train of his argumentation concludes unanswerably against himself.

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But what I cannot account for in him is this, that though his whole reasoning manifestly supposes that he has a thorough knowledge of all the properties of a glorified body; nay, though all he says must of necessity fall to the ground without that knowledge, yet in one of his letters to Eusebius, he fairly owns he knows nothing about the matter at all; his words are these: "You ask me whether the same body cannot, by the power of God. be in different places at the same time? to which I answer, that if you mean a glorified body I cannot tell, because I know no more of the properties of a glorified body than I do of a spirit." Now, after this plain confession of his ignorance, wherein he certainly speaks the truth, with what face can ke run out with such virulence and heat against transubstantiation, as involving contradictions in its bosom; though by his own principles it is impossible for him to prove any contradictions in it, without having a thorough knowledge of all the properties of a glorified body! Is this acting as becomes the divine, the philosopher, or even the man !

Orthod.—This, my dear sir, needs not surprise you; it is only an instance, among many others of those self-contradictions which every one must necessarily fall into who is engaged in defence of error. Truth is always consistent with itself, and its beauty is never displayed in stronger colours, than by the inconsistencies and self-contradictions of those too self-sufficient adversaries who

set themselves virulently to oppose it.

Phil.—Your observation is very just. But now, suppose the above pretended contradictions were urged against you by themselves, I should be glad to know

what answer you would give to each of them.

Orthod.—In the first place, I am not obliged to give any answer to them at all till they first prove their reality, which their ignorance of the things makes it impossible for them ever to do; just as Benevolus would answer to the apparent contradictions pretended to be found in the mystery of the Trinity or Incarnation. In the second place, I would observe, that these apparents

rent contradictions alleged against transubstantiation, have even less weight against it than those of the Trinity have against that mystery; for the contradictions which Deists allege against the Trinity appear in that very mystery itself, in the very terms in which it is proposed; whereas it is not so much as pretended that the real doctrine of transubstantiation, as above explained, contains in itself even a shadow of contradiction or of impossibility; and I might defy Benevolus himself to point out any such thing in it. All the contradictions, absurdities, or impossibilities supposed to be found in transubstantiation, are only pretended to be found in its consequences. If it be true, say they, then it will follow that the same body of Jesus Christ must be in many different places at one and the same time. That the same one body of Christ may have opposite qualities at the same time. That the whole body of a man must be contained in the small space of an host, and so on. All which you see are only alleged as consequences of the doctrine, while the doctrine itself stands free of all shadow of contradiction; whereas the contradictions alleged against the Holy Trinity, attack the very mystery itself, as it is apparently impossible, (say they who deny it,) that three persons really distinct among themselves, and of each of whom we can affirm what we cannot say of the others, should yet be but one and the self-same individual divine being. If, therefore, our ignorance of the nature of the objects in the blessed Trinity, enervates the weight of these apparent contradictions, and fully frees us from even attempting to explain them, though they fall, if I may say so, upon the very vitals of the mystery itself; how much more must our ignorance of the nature of the objects in the mystery of transubstantiation, totally destroy all the apparent weight of any contradiction alleged against it, and free us from all obligation of explaining them, or endeavoring to reconcile them, considering that they attack not the mystery itself, but only fall upon the consequences supposed to flow from it? But in the third place, from what I have said above, you

will find it no difficult matter to give an answer even toeach of those supposed contradictions themselves.

Phil.—I should be glad to see what could be said to

each of them.

Orthod.—I shall now show you that, and begin with examining whether it be possible for one and the same body to be in different places at the same time. This, though readily acknowledged by several learned Protestants, is held out by Benevolus and others as an absolute impossibility; but I am afraid it would not be easy for them to show any clear contradiction in it, by reason of the very limited and imperfect knowledge we have both of body and place. The miracle of feeding five thousand men, besides women and children, with five barley loaves and two small fishes, affords so strong an argument to prove that the power of God can make even natural bodies exist in different places at the same time, that I might defy Benevolus to give any satisfactory answer to it. But I shall lay no stress upon that; the question is not about any natural body, but about the body of Jesus Christ; that body which even before his death, while in a mortal state as well as now, was intimately united with the divinity, was capable even then of putting on the qualities of a glorified body, as was done at the transfiguration, and is now totally and unchangeably in a glorified state at the right hand of his Father. Now, if transubstantiation be true, it will evi dently follow, not that a natural body may be in differ ent places at once, but that this glorious body of Jesus Christ may be, nay, must be in numberless different places at one and the same time. Who shall dare toaffirm this to be impossible? Does Benevolus, or any mortal man, comprehend the qualities and perfections of a glorified body, and of a glorified body which is incom prehensibly united to the divine nature in one person? Shall finite man dare to pronounce what is possible or impossible for the glorified body of a God made man, todo? Shall the creature take upon him to define what. the body of his Creator is capable or incapable or doing?

We must therefore acknowledge here, as Benevolus does with regard to the Holy Trinity,—that our ignorance of the nature and qualities of a glorified body, especially of a glorified body united in one person with the divinity, "is an effectual bar against the possibility of proving its existence in different places at the same time to be an absurdity, and therefore no parallel can be fairly drawn between it and natural bodies," even though it should be granted that these last cannot be so replicated.

This being the case, the second pretended contradiction that is alleged to flow from transubstantiation, viz. that the same one body of Jesus Christ would have opposite qualities at the same time, falls to the ground all at once. For if the body of Jesus Christ can be in different places at one and the same time, what contradiction can there be in his exhibiting himself to us in one place with one kind of qualities, and with others in another? Observe these qualities are extrinsical to the essence of the body; they do not affect or alter its nature. It was the self-same Holy Ghost that appeared at the Jordan under the form of a dove, and to the apostles under the form of fiery tongues; and surely no man can doubt that he could have taken both these appearances at the same time, had he been pleased to do In like manner, it is the self-same Jesus Christ that sat at table in a human form with his apostles, and was at the same time in the blessed sacrament under the form of bread; the outward appearances under which he exhibited himself to his apostles in two different places at once, made no difference in his nature. was perfectly the same in both places. Hence you may see, that the force of this argument in which Benevolus so much exults, disappears at once; and that the fallacy couched under it rises from its supposing that the opposite qualities he speaks of alter the nature of our Saviour's body; and that they would be in it not only at the same time, but also in the same place, both which suppositions, you see, are false.

As for the other pretended impossibility, that the

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whole body of a man should be contained under the small space of an host, and in every visible particle of it, it vanishes all at once upon the same principles. Our - Saviour himself assures us, that at resurrection even our bodies shall become like the angels of God, putting on the properties and qualities of spirits. Now, one quality of spirits is, not to be confined to any particular magnitude in themselves, much less in the appearances they assume in our eyes. The angels that appeared of old to the servants of God were still the same, whether they took upon them the appearance of a large man or of a little one; and shall it be denied that Jesus Christ, God and man, can appear to us under any form or magnitude he pleases?—Our ignorance of what is possible or impossible for his glorious body, puts an effectual bar to the possibility of proving any absurdity or impossibility in his doing so.

Phil.—What you say, in my opinion, can admit of no reply; and to me you have made it evident, that it is impossible to prove any absurdity or contradiction in transubstantiation, for the very same reason, and upon the self-same grounds, that it is impossible to prove any such in the mystery of the Trinity, or indeed in any of the sacred mysteries of the Christian religion. Our imperfect knowledge, or rather our ignorance of the objects of these mysteries, makes it impossible for us to judge by our reason of what is possible or impossible in them, and upon that account they are all above our What we know of them we could never have thought of, had not God revealed it to us, and his revelation, as it is the only possible way by which we could ever have known them, so it gives us the most undoubted certainty of what he announces respecting them; therefore on that ground we most rationally believe them, though we neither see nor understand them.

Orthod.—Your observation is most just; and the natural consequence of all we have seen is that as there cannot be a more convincing proof that God reveals any doctrine, than a miracle proper to God wrought in attesta-

tion of it, the doctrine of transubstantiation is as capable of being proved to be a revealed truth by such a miracle wrought for that end, as any other mystery of the Christian religion, and therefore, that the incredulity of Benevolus is without excuse, and his famous proposition Is not only blasphemous in itself, as we have seen above, but all he says in defence of it totally destitute of reason, and can only arise from an unpardonable ignorance of the real doctrine he pretends to condemn.*

Phil.—Sir, I am much obliged to you for all this trouble you have taken, and shall endeavour to improve

by your instructions.

Orthod.—You are exceedingly welcome, my dear Sir.

^{*} Faber in his Difficulties of Romanism,—a complete refutation of which, by Rev. Mr. Husenbeth, is included in the Prospectus of this Library - Faber, referring to the argument refuted in this Appendix, and the language in which it is urged, observes- 'Some persons, I regret to say, have been far too copious in the use of those unseemly terms, absurdity and impossibility. To such language the least objection is its reprehensible want of good manners; a much more serious objection, is the tone of presumptuous loftiness which pervades it, and which (so far as I can judge) is wholly unbefitting a creature of very narrow faculties. Certainly, God will do nothing absurd, and can do nothing impossible; but it does not, therefore, exactly follow, that our view of things should be always perfectly correct, and wholly free from misapprehension Contradictions we may easily fancy, where in truth there are none. Hence, before we pronounce any particular doctrine a contradic-tion, we must be sure that we perfectly understand the nature of the matter propounded in that doctrine, for otherwise the contradiction may not be in the matter itself, but in our mode of conceiving it. * * * * The doctrine of transubstantiation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a question, not of abstract reasoning, but of pure evidence. We believe the revelation of God to be essential and unerring truth. Our business, therefore most plainly is, not to discuss the abstract absurdity and the imagined contradictoriness of transubstantiation, but to inquire according to the best means which we possess, whether it be indeed a doctrine of Holy Scripture. If sufficient evidence shall determine such to be the case, we may be sure that the doctrine is neither absurd nor contradictory .- Chap iv. p. 43, Phil. ed.

THE ANTIQUITY OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUESTANTIATION.

Orthod. -- But to return to that piece of Doctor Cosin's history, where he tells us, that transubstantiation was first invented about the middle of the twelfth century, I shall now produce some testimonies of fathers, that lived in the fourth: and if these teach the doctrine of transubstantiation as plainly as Bellarmin himself, then the Doctor must stand condemned. I have already fairly proved St. Austin and St. Chrysostom to be found papists in relation to the article in question. To these I shall for brevity's sake only add four more, two Greek and two Latin fathers (for I omit a whole cloud more of venerable witnesses), viz., St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Ambrose, and St. Jerome. Whoever cannot find the doctrine of transubstantiation in these fathers, must have very bad eyes. I say the doctrine; for I am not disposed to trifle about the word.

St. Cyril (Catech. Mystag.) writes thus; Jesus Christ (says he) in Cana of Galilee changed water into wine, which has some affinity with blood, by his will only, And can we not believe him, that he changed the wine into his own blood?—Let your soul rejoice in the Lord being persuaded of it as a thing most certain, that the bread, which appears to our eyes, is not bread, though our taste do judge it to be so, but that it is the body of Jesus Christ. And that the wine, which appears to our eyes is not wine, though our sense of taste takes it for wine, but that it is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Nothing can be plainer than this.

St. Gregory Nyssen in the same century having said, that the immortal body of Christ (as a powerful preservative) is received into our bowels, and then inquired, how this same body, which is distributed to so many thousands of the faithful over all the earth, should be entire in each of these, and in each part, which they receive, and yet not cease to remain entire in itself? He answers, because the visible substance of bread and wine are changed into it. The body of Christ, says he,

deified by his person. And therefore I have reason to believe, that to this day the bread being sanctified by the word of God is changed into the body of God the Son. For there the divine person sanctified the body, which had bread for its nourishment, and so was as it were bread. And here in like manner, bread, to use the words of the apostle, is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. Not so, that it is to be changed into the body of Christ by nourishing it; but that it is subdenly changed into it by these words, this is my body; the nature of those things that appear, being transelemented into it by the power of consecration. In Orat. Catech. Cap. 37. T. 3. Edit. Par.

This I think is teaching the doctrine of transubstantia-

tion, though the word itself be not made use of.

St. Ambrose likewise teaches it so very plainly that the Protestant Centurists made bold to give him a reprimand for it, saying, Ambrose did not write well of transubstantiation. Cent. 4. C. 4. Col. 295. It seems then he wrote of it; and since he lived above 700 years before the middle of the twelfth century, I know not what wil?

become of Doctor Cosin's epocha.

Let us then see how he handles this subject in his book De Initiatis: Perhaps, says he, you may tell me I see another thing. I must therefore prove, that what you receive, is not that which nature framed, but that, which the benediction has created; and that the benediction has a greater force than nature. Moses held a rod in his hand, he threw it down, and it was made a serpent. Again he took hold of the serpent, and it returned into the nature of a rod—The rivers of Egypt ran with streams of pure water, when presently blood gushed forth out of the fountain. There was no water in the rivers, and again at the prayer of Moses the blood ceased, and the nature of waters returned—.

To those he adds other miracles: viz., that when Moses held up his rod, the sea opened a passage for the Israelites. That Jordan ran back. That Moses brought water out of a rock by striking it; and that Elisha made

tron swim upon the water contrary to its nature. Then he goes on thus; We see therefore that grace is stronger than nature. Now, if a man's blessing could change the course of nature, what do we think of the divine consecration itself, in which the very words of our Saviour operate? For the sacrament, which you receive, is made by the words of Christ. And if Elisha's words were able to draw fire from heaven, will not Christ's words be able to change the species of the elements? We read of all creatures in the world, he said and they were made, he commanded, and they were created: Is not then the word of Christ, which could give a being to that which had none, able to change those things which are, into what they were not before? For it is not less to give new natures to things, than to change their natures.

Lastly, St Jerome Epist. ad Heliod. writes thus: God forbid I shall speak detractingly of those men [Bishops] who succeeding the apostles in their functions do MAKE

THE BODY OF CHRIST with their sacred mouth.

These certainly are authentic witnesses of the public faith of the church in their times, both in regard of their holiness and learning; and because they never were accused by the church of any error against faith; which censure they could not have escaped, had they been guilty of broaching any doctrine contrary to the known faith of the universal church. Whence it is plain, that they taught no other doctrine, than what they had received by a constant tradition from the apostles; for otherwise they would undoubtedly have been publicly censured for introducing novelties into the church.

Even many protestants convinced by these, and other numberless testimonies of the ancient fathers have owned the antiquity of transubstantiation. For besides the Centurists, who blame several fathers by name for teaching it, Adamus Francisci (marg. Theol. p. 256) confesses that transubstantiation entered early into the church. And Antonius de Adamo another protestant writer (Anat. Miss. p. 36) fairly owns, that he has not hitherto been

able to know when this opinion of the real and bodily being of Christ in the sacrament did begin. Which according to St. Austin's maxim against the Donatists, is owing in effect, that it had its beginning from Christ, and his apostles.

Hence I may fairly conclude, that Dr. Cosin's calling transubstantiation a novelty invented about the middle of the twelfth century, and your telling me that the primitive church and fathers are all against it, are two

assertions wholly void of truth.

St. Ignatius bishop of Antioch, in the very first age, a disciple of the apostles, and an illustrious martyr, is alone sufficient to disprove both the Doctor and yourself; and give us certain information of what the primitive church believed and taught concerning the Eucharist. For in his genuine epistle to the church of Smyrna he has these remarkable words (quoted also by Theodoret) of the heretics of his time: They do not admit Eucharists and oblations, because they do not confess, that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father raised again by his bounty.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION NOT REPUGNANT TO THE CURRENT PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHY.

Phil.—Good Sir, You have repeated many times that the substance of bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ; but that the accidents of both remain.

Orthod.-Well, sir, what then?

Phil.—Then I ask, whether you know the difference betwixt substance and accident?

Orthod.—Sir, when I was a boy, I was taught to answer, that substance is a being which subsists by itself, and that the essence of an accident is not actual inhesion, but a natural exigency to inhere. So that, though by a supernatural power it may exist without any sub-

ject, it still retains its essence, because it naturally requires a subject, even when it exists without one.

Phil.—Good sir, this seems to be a philosophical scheme cooked up expressly to make the hard morsel

of transubstantiation go down the better.

Orthod.—Sir, I believe the cookery does not please your palate. However it is good sound Aristotelian philosophy. And Aristotle (who lived long enough before transubstantiation was known in the world) could not easily be bribed by papists to come in to their notions. Now he taught expressly, that accidents are really distinguished, and may consequently by a supernatural power be separated from their substance; as we say they are in the sacrament of the holy Eucharist. And so we cannot be said to have made a precarious philosophical scheme in favour of transubstantiation: since we only maintain, that it is not repugnant to current principles held for many hundred years before christianity was established.

Phil.—Good sir, when the substance of bread is gone, how can the figure, and colour, and taste of it remain? "For then there will be accidents of nothing. There will be roundness, and nothing round; whiteness, and nothing white; a taste, and nothing tasted; which is

ridiculous."

Orthod.—It is so, sir, if quantity be nothing. But quantity according to Aristotle's philosophy is a physical accident distinct, and by consequence separable from substance; and it is the immediate subject of the other accidents mentioned by you; which in reality are but so many different modifications of quantity; and therefore cannot be destitute of their proper subject, whether quantity be joined to, or separated from its substance; as it is in the sacrament of the holy Eucharist.

Phil.—"Good sir, if quantity, and other accidents subsist by themselves, why are they not substances? For that is the definition you give of substance."

Orthod.—Sir, the reason is, because they do not sub-

sist naturally by themselves, as substance does, but only by a supernatural power.

Phil.—"But if it be by miracle, that they stand by themselves, then by miracle they are substances, and

there is an end of the jargon."

Orthod.—Sir, I hope there is. For I have already told you, that their essence, according to Aristotle's philosophy (which I think you have not yet confuted,) is not an actual inhesion, but a natural exigency of it, which remains when they are miraculously separated from their substance. And therefore, good sir, the miracle, by which they are thus separated, does not convert them into substances.

Phil.—"If you, good sir, be in earnest about this logic of substance and accidents, will you lay a good wager upon it?"—p. 153.

Orthod.—Ĥudibras says, fools for arguments lay wa-

gers.

Phil.—"Yet you have laid all your honour and estate upon it. But are you so sure of it, that you would take your oath upon it."

Orthod.—Whatever you may fancy, sir, I do not know that I hazard the value of a farthing upon the logical

question of substance and accidents.

Phil.—That is very strange, my dear sir. Is it not a point of faith with you, that the accidents of bread and wine remain after the consecration?

Orthod.—It is, sir; if by accidents you mean the signs or appearances of bread and wine. But whether those signs or appearances be true physical accidents, or only modifications of the object, or such impressions made upon our outward senses by the body and blood of Christ, as bread and wine, if they had been present, would have made; are mere school questions, upon which I shall never be disposed to hazard either my honour or estate, much less pawn my soul upon the truth or certainty of them; the faith of the church being not the least concerned in them.

Phil.—But, my good sir, did you not just now defend transubstantiation by the philosophical distinction between substance and accidents?

Orthod.—But, sir, do you make no difference between building faith upon philosophy, and shewing that the one is not repugnant to the other? I believe all mysteries of faith purely upon divine revelation, and not upon their non-repugnance to human reason, which only shews them to be possible. But if a man be such a trifler as to muster up boyish arguments from philosophy against them, am I not a debtor to the wise, and to the unwise, and bound to shew that christianity and philosophy are not irreconcilable? And for this reason I have insisted upon the Aristotelian distinction of accidents and substance: not that the mystery of transubstantiation is built upon that philosophical distinction, or depends upon it, but only to convince you, that it is not repugnant to the current principles of philosophy.

Phil.—"Good sir, this is that philosophy, and vain deceit or fallacy, which the apostles says will spoil or hurt our faith. Doting upon questions and strifes of words—perverse disputings—and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Col. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5, 21, 22."

Orthod.—Sir, the apostle censures those, who draw arguments from philosophy to overthrow, or ridicule the sacred mysteries of christian religion. So that you have only provided a scourge for your own back; and, if you will but consider yourself attentively in the looking-glass St. Paul has se thefore you, it will discover to you the weak condition of your cause. I have proved transubstantiation from scriptures, and the unquestionable tradition of the church. And what do you oppose against these solid proofs but arguments from human reason, the testimony of our senses, and poor trifles of philosophy, which the apostle justly calls, dotting upon questions and strifes of words, perverse disputings, and opposition of science falsely so called? These

we have the condescension to take notice of them, and oppose philosophy against philosophy (which indeed is more than you can in rigour oblige us to in controversies of faith,) you cry out, that we have nothing but an unintelligible jargon of metaphysics on our side. As if philosophy were intended only to run down christian religion, and it were an abuse to employ any part of it in its service.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION AS ANCIENT AS CHRISTIANITY.

Orthod.—Now, Sir, to conclude the subject we have been so long upon, I shall propose an argument, which appears to me to be a moral demonstration, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is as ancient as christianity, and never had a beginning but from the apostles themselves. I shall explain myself in the clearest manner I am able; and the first thing I remark to you is, that if the doctrine of transubstantiation be a novelty, it is one of the most extraordinary nature that ever was broached: both because it is not a mere speculative doctrine, but the ground of the most solemn practical devotions of the church; and because it is in itself the most seemingly repugnant to all the senses and reasons of mankind.

Phil.—And what does your lordship infer from thence?

Orthod.—Sir, I infer from it, first, that a novelty of this nature, could not be brought into the church without noise, disputes, and troubles; and in a word, without the greatest difficulty and opposition imaginable: because people are not wont to part tamely and quietly with their ancient faith; especially when a doctrine the most repugnant in appearance to sense and reason is substituted in place of it. I infer, 2dly, that the exact time, manner, and other circumstances of a novelty of that importance being brought in, and made an article of faith must of necessity be known by all the learned part of the world. Whence I infer, 3dly, that the histories of the time, in which this happened, must all be filled with particular relations of the most memorable events occasioned by this wonderful change in the public faith of the church.

Now I have a ready proved, with the utmost evidence against Dr. Cosin, that the doctrine of transubstantiation was held both

by the Greek and Latin church in the eleventh century, when it was first openly written against by Berengarius, who was immediately opposed by the ablest pens of that time, and condemned by eleven provincial councils in that very age; the last whereof defined in express terms, that the bread and wine, when they are consecrated upon the altar, are truly and essentially changed into the body and blood of our Saviour, and not in figure only. Tom. 10. Conc. Lab. p. 502.

If then the doctrine of transubstantiation be not as ancient as the apostles themselves, but a novelty invented since their time, it must have been introduced into the church in some age between the death of the apostles, and the eleventh century. And unless protestants can prove this fact from the uncontestable evidence of as authentic histories and records, as there are (for example) to prove that England was converted in some age between the death of the apostles and the eleventh century, they labour in vain to persuade any man of sense that the doctrine of transubstantiaton is a novelty invented since the time of the apostles.

The reason hereof is manifest, because all changes in religion are constantly attended with such a train of remarkable circumstances and events, as cannot possibly escape the notice of historians; and I can as easily believe the greatest contradiction in nature, as that such changes can really happen without being mentioned in the general histories both of the times, which gave birth to them, and of the kingdoms, which were

the principal theatres, on which they were transacted.

Thus we have the history of the Arian, Nestorian, Eutychian and other less considerable heresies transmitted to us by innumerable hands, which inform us not only of the names, but of the very personal qualities of the chief authors of them: of the very year and place, wherein they were first broached: of the progress they made, the opposition they met with, the disturbances they occasioned, the books that were written for and against them, the councils that were called to condemn them, and other such particulars, from whence we cannot but form a fixed judgment, first, that the main facts contained in these histories are no fictions; and 2dly, that the doctrines so particularized in every circumstance relating to them have all the marks of being novelties brought into the church since the time of the apostles.

Now if this be so in relation to all heresies or new doctrines, that ever were broached in the church: if none of them could ever escape either being detected by the vigilancy of her pass

ors, or recorded in the writings of those, whose business it is p instruct posterity in the transactions of past ages: If this, I my, be so, then let any one judge, whether it be possible, that such a change in the public faith of the church as the introduzing of transubstantiation must have made (if it were not apostolical doctrine) could be compassed without the same violent struggles, disturbances, and opposition! And then I ask, whether it be possible, that such considerable events could be passed over in silence by the histories of the times, in which they happened? I take this to be as morally impossible, as that the changes of religion in the reign of queen Elizabeth, or the Revolution under king James II. should be wholly omitted by

an historian writing the lives of those two persons.

This then is the substance of my argument in short. substantiation was the public faith and doctrine of the church in the eleventh century: therefore, if it was not taught by the apostles themselves, it was introduced in some age between the death of the apostles, and that century. But a novelty of that extraordinary nature, and so repugnant in appearance to all the senses and reason of mankind could not be introduced without noise, disputes, and troubles, and throwing the whole church into disorder and confusion; and such remarkable events cannot but be recorded in the histories of the times, in which they happened; therefore if nothing of this appears in ancient or authentic history, it is a moral demonstration, that they never happened at all: and that by consequence the doctrine of transubstantiation is as ancient as christianity, and derived from

the apostles themselves.

Let us suppose the whole christian world agreed now in the belief that the bread and wine remain unchanged in the sacrament, and that this belief had been handed down to us from the very time of the apostles till now. I ask, first, whether it would be possible for any man in this case to introduce the doctrine of transubstantiation without being opposed even by some whole national churches, many universities, and by numberless persons both of the prelatic order and inferior clergy? I ask, 2dly, whether this opposition would not cause great disturbances and troubles, and throw the whole church into the most violent ferment? And I ask 3dly, whether such a revolution in the public faith of the church, in case it should succeed, could be passed over in silence by all the writers of the age, wherein it happened? I cannot think there is a rational man apon earth, but his reason and conscience will tell him, they are all three morally impossible in the case supposed.

indeed there is no example of it since the very first establishment

of christian religion.

I add, that if transubstantiation be not apostolical doctrine, it is a most gross and pernicious heresy: and since it is an incontestable truth, that it was believed, professed, and maintained by the universal church against Berengarius in the eleventh century, if it be an heresy, it must have been invented in some preceding age, by some particular herestarch, in some particular town or country; and it must have had a name to distinguish it both from other heresies, and the orthodox faith opposite to it.

Here then to give a solid answer to this argument, you are bound to show from some authentic ancient history all the following particulars, viz., in what age between the death of the apostles and the eleventh century the doctrine of transubstantiation was first invented. Who was the first author of it. In what town or country it was first professed. (For all new doctrines must have their beginning of place as well as time.) By what name the professors of it were distinguished from other heretics, and what councils were called to condemn it. Because there never was a noted heresy in the world, but was distinguished by some name, and condemned in some council, or by the church diffusive. Finally you must inform me by what methods it made such a prodigious progress, as to be at length acknowledged, professed, and maintained by the universal church, as I have fully proved it was in the eleventh century.

These are the most important particulars, wherein I demand to be satisfied. For nothing less can suffice to convince any man of sense, that the doctrine of transubstantiation is a novelty invented since the time of the apostles. Neither must you pretend to slur me off with precarious guesses, bare possibilities, or imaginary suppositions of your own fruitful invention; but you must produce authentic history to attest the facts I insist upon, as all men of learning can do to witness every fact of moment relating to any noted heresy, that ever was in the world.

But, if neither you, nor any body else can undertake this task without exposing himself to the laughter of mankind: if there be no ancient history extant, in which there appears a fair account both of the beginning, the author, time, place, and progress of the doctrine in question, with the most remarkable events that attended it till its full establishment in the eleventh tentury, when it was the public faith both of the Greek and Latin church: if, I say, nothing of all this can be found in any uncient history or records, then I repeat once more, what I said

before, that such a universal silence relating to a thing of that moment is a moral demonstration, that the doctrine of transubstantiation never had any other beginning than from the apostles themselves according to St. Austin's rule, which is grounded upon constant experience and common sense, viz., that when any doctrine is found generally received in the visible church in any age whatsoever, whereof there is no certain author or beginning to be found, then it is sure, that such a doctrine came down from Christ and his apostles. L. 4. de Bapt. C. 6. 24., as also Lib. de Unit. Eccl. C. 19.

Give me leave, sir, to illustrate all this from an example which will set the whole matter in the clearest light. I maintain, that the doctrine opposite to transubstantiation is an heresy. If you ask me how I prove it to be one? I answer that I prove it from a full collection of all such historical facts as I demand of you to prove that transubstantiation is a novelty or heresy. For I will shew the doctrine opposite to it to be a novelty brought into the church many ages after the time of the apostles. I will name the chief author of it, the time when, and the place where he first broached it: the name it was distinguished by, and finally the opposition it met with in the universal church.

It was first publicly maintained about the middle of the eleventh century at Lyons in France. The chief author of it was one Berengarius a canon of that place, and his doctrine was called the Berengarian heresy. He had few followers in those days, and himself retracted it before he died. Yet it alarmed the whole church, and caused very great disturbances. The ablest pens were employed against it, and it was condemned by eleven provincial or national councils before the end of that very century. And all these particulars with many more are transmitted to us by all the ecclesiastical histories of that age.

This I think suffices to convince any man of sense, that the doctrine opposite to transubstantiation was regarded as an heresy by the Catholic Church in the eleventh century, and it follows manifestly from it, that if transubstantiation itself had ever been regarded as an heresy by the Catholic Church in any of the preceding ages, it must have undergone the same fate, found the same opposition, if not greater by reason of its seeming extravagance, caused the same disturbances, excited the zeal of particular persons to write against it, and occasioned the calling of councils to condemn it. But since no ancient ecclesiastical historian, or other writer has ever mentioned any such thing: since neither the person by whom, nor the place where,

nor the time when it was first broached in any of those ages nor finally any opposition made to it by the church in any age between the apostles and the eleventh century was ever recordded in any history, that ever appeared in the world; I say once more that this is a moral demonstration, that the Catholic Church has never regarded transubstantiation as a novelty or heresy, but as a doctrine derived from Christ, and his apostles. For it is wholly inconceivable, that the doctrine opposite to transubstantiation should have been so vigorously opposed by the church, if it were not a novelty; and that transubstantiation itself, if it were a novelty, should never meet with any opposition at all. Now if you please, sir, you may proceed to rome other subject. Adieu.

THE MAD.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

OF

THE RIGHT REV. GEORGE HAY, D. D.

AUTHOR OF THESE VOLUMES, ETC.

Or the theological works published in the English language by Catholic writers, those treating of controversy and explanatory of doctrine and ceremony merely, have hitherto been almost the only kind sought after by our separated brethren. supposition was once entertained in Exeter Hall, and has been repeated in various shapes, either through ignorance or prejudice, by those too ready to take their knowledge of us from the tracts, fierce discourses, and public meetings of enemies, that in this country we have scarcely any religious literature but of a polemical kind, and that books, the object of which is to inculcate moral duties, and to direct the soul in the higher walks of a devout life, are rarely found, and as rarely valued amongst us. Such notions, it need hardly be observed, are as untrue as they admit of easy confutation whenever people are disposed to use their own eyes instead of others to guide their judgments; for deeply as we are impressed with the belief, that one set of doctrines only among the discordant creeds of modern times was taught by Christ, and that it is the bounden duty of all, without thought of human fear or favour, to search for that one, yet even when, through the grace of God crowning their sincere inquiries, converts have discovered the True Faith, the Catholic Church never fails to remind her new children, that great as is the blessing they have received, they have yet only mounted the steps, or at most entered into the porch of the temple of religion, and that so far from having completed their labors by taking to themselves the name of Catholic, the work of sanctification only then in reality begins. For this purpose, she no longer recommends to converts the study of doctrinal subjects, but far more earnestly urges them to spend themselves in prayer and the holy sacraments, and for this purpose she exhorts them also to seek entertainment in such books chiefly as will strengthen them in the love of these holy exercises. Hence it will be found, that in our language the Church has numberless volumes most admirably mited to enforce this wise system, written by Challoner, Gother,

Hornyhold, Manning, &c., &c., and hence the high repute in which the writings of Bishop Hay have been always held; for while they enlighten the Sincere, they also inform and consolidate the Practical and Devout Christian; and filled to overflowing with most convincing and affecting passages from Holy Scripture, they are as well calculated to carry the soul to perfection, as to lead it, in the first instance, into the way of Truth,

Dr. George Hav, the author of the following work, was born in Edinburgh, of Protestant parents, in the year of Lord 1729, and was related to that noble family, the head of which is now Marquis of Tweedale. After receiving a good general education, he followed the profession of Surgery, and was induced by his master to attend the Highland army, which in the year '45, led by Prince Charles Stuart, penetrated into England. disastrous battle of Culloden was followed by the death or imprisonment of many who had escaped from the unequal field, and young Hay was confined at first in the castle of Edinburgh, and then conveyed with many more to London. Here, among other subjects of conversation, religion was at times discussed, and he was surprised to find arguments adduced in support of the . Catholic Church, much stronger than any he had been told to expect: a number of books on the old Faith, and the arguments employed by those who had deserted it, also fell into his hands at this time, and these, with the conversations of a friend, at length induced him to apply for admission into the Church, in which he made his first communion with extraordinary fervor Dec. 29, 1749.

As the penal laws were still in force against all who professed the ancient Creed, he thought of entering into the Spanish service, that he might enjoy, at least, liberty of conscience; but at Cadiz becoming acquainted with an Augustinian friar, he was so moved by his pious conversation, that he altered his plan, and resolved to renounce the service of the world, and give himself up entirely to religion. For this purpose he proceeded to the Scotch College at Rome, where he remained several years, until in the year 1759 he was ordained priest, and sent by his superiors to his native country. It would be useless in the short space allowed us here, to attempt to describe the manner in which he performed all the duties of his state, or to show the zeal with which he supported every measure, admitting his help, intended to advance the glory of God and the good of souls; it may suffice to observe, such was the general opinion of his merit, that within ten years from the time of his ordination he was raised to the episcopacy at the pressing instance of Dr. Grant, and with the universal approval of his fellow-clergy.

Distinctions only served to stimulate the new bishor to inzreased exertions, and the description given of his labors and mode of living at this period, cannot fail to edify. "Preaching he looked on as a pastor's indispensable duty, and accordingly he was unremitting in the labors of the pulpit. A plain unaffected style, enriched with many and various texts of the Holy Scriptures, great earnestness, and strong reasoning, were the characteristics of his eloquence. He was no less assiduous in hearing confessions, and visiting the sick. He never neglected to tonsecrate some hours daily to the sanctification of his own soul. With equal attention did he watch over the general interests of the District, directing and exciting the zeal of his clergy by example, by exhortations, and pastoral letters. sides the onerous duties of his charge, a proper division and good use of his time enabled him to devote himself to the defence of religion, an extensive correspondence, and the repeal of the penal laws against Catholics. He rose very early, meditated for an hour, recited Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None; prepared by long and fervent devotions for his daily celebration of mass,-He heard another if possible, and afterwards read some time from an abstract of some of the best ascetic writers drawn up in short-hand by himself. Business filled up his hours till dinnertime, after which he resumed it, and recited the divine office. At 8 o'clock P. M. he invariably spent an hour in contemplation, either in his closet, or in the chapel before the blessed Sacrament. A light supper, evening prayers with his family, and his own studies and devotions, prolonged till midnight, concluded the day. A small narrow bedstead, having a mattrass, two blankets, and no sheets formed his couch. He confessed every fortnight, and in travelling recited the Itinerarium Clericorum. He never wore linen, and yet was very cleanly in his person and dress, which was of the coarsest manufacture, and shaped without regard to fashion. For several years he lived chiefly on milk and vegetables, drinking only water; and while his health permitted, he would never allow a servant to make his bed, dust his room, or kindle his fire. All these mortifications he practised without being in the least morose, but invariably cheerful and agreeable. His severities were practised on himself alone. The honor of God was the aim of all his words and actions, and he bore injuries without the least resentment. Conformity to the will of God was a subject of his daily meditation; and he used to comment with great delight on a collection which he made of the different parts of Scripture enforcing it. He made frequent visitations of his district, on which occasions he distributed to the poor even more than his scenty means could

bear, and gave medical assistance, in places where it could not be otherwise procured, to crowds who flocked to him for advice."

Bishop Hay's career was chequered by many troubles, all of which he met with energy and patience. In the year 1779 the penal laws were relaxed, and the mob of Edinburgh, excited to the highest degree of fury by the intolerant sermons and speeches every where addressed to them, proceeded to destroy the chapels and property of the Catholics. A few years afterwards nearly all the property in the funds, belonging to the Scotch clergy in France, was confiscated, but under neither of these trials did he lose his confidence in Almighty God. With slender means he yet contrived to establish a seminary for the education of ecclesiastical students at Aquhorties, and governed it himself with such wisdom and piety as might be expected from one of his established character.

For a considerable time before his death he had begged leave to surrender his episcopal jurisdiction that he might give himself wholly to the sanctification of his own soul; but his Holiness refused to listen to the proposition until mental and bodily infirmities rendered Dr. Hay incapable of directing the affairs of his district.

"A long life of uncommon activity, intense application and continual mortification had impaired the faculties of his mind. Repeated strokes of the palsy deprived him of the power of speech; and during the last two years of his life, though in other respects in good health, his mental powers were totally suspended, being worn out by incessant labor. At last a severe illness, followed by loss of appetite, announced his approaching end. On the night of the 15th of October, 1811, in the 83d year of his age, and 43d of his episcopal dignity, this great Bishop and eminent servant of God, gave up his happy soul into the hands of his Creator. He was interred within the walls of a decayed Catholic chapel on the banks of the Don, not far from the house of Fetternear. His extraordinary merit acquired him during his lifetime the respect even of the enemies of his religion, and he has been justly ranked with the most illustrious prelates of the age in which he lived."

His works it is unnecessary to praise. The Sincere, Devout and Pious Christian, will be valued and studied as long as the English language survives. His work on Miracles was translated into French, and published in Paris in 1808 in 3 volumes. His Sincere Christian has been translated into Italian, and published last year in Rome. May God, in his infinite mercy, give thee, O reader, the grace to derive from this book the profit of the so many before thee have drawn from it!

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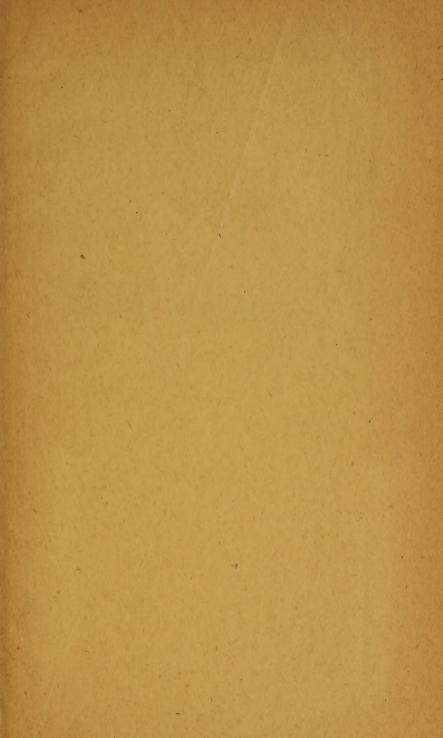












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